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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The Hubris of Philosophy: Alcibiades' Praise of Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*

by

Ⓒ Daniel Gallagher

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF Master of Arts

Department of Political Science

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Hubris of Philosophy: Alcibiades' Praise of Socrates in Plato's *Symposium* submitted by Daniel Gallagher in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Supervisor

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Date 25 August 1987

Abstract

This commentary seeks to understand and assess the role of Alcibiades' eulogy of Socrates in the overall context of the *Symposium*. Proceeding from an analysis of Diotima's erotic doctrine as recounted by Socrates, I argue that the seventh and final speech of the *Symposium*, despite being billed as a praise of Socrates, actually bids us to take seriously the Aristophanic charge that the philosopher's hubristic pursuit of wisdom has a disruptive effect upon the political community. As a consequence of his association with Socrates, Alcibiades became a dangerously divided man, torn between his love of popular praise and his love of Socratic virtue: Alcibiades emerged from his relationship with Socrates as a man perched mid-way between the goodness of philosophy and the goodness of political glory, a man whose reason despised the popular praise that his *eros* craved for. The failure of Alcibiades to consummate his love for Socrates or to devote himself fully to the Socratic example of human excellence thus evinces a dangerous disharmony in the human soul between reason and erotic passion, and suggests (contrary to Diotima's teaching on *eros*) that human beings often remain ambivalent in the face of the truth about the human good. Finally, I argue, the case of Alcibiades' failure as a lover of virtue compels us to wonder about Socrates' efficacy as a teacher of virtue, inasmuch as it suggests that the philosopher's hubristic rationality often leaves him incapable of sublimating the *eros* of certain exceptionally spirited men towards the pursuit of nobility and goodness. Ultimately, the case of Alcibiades in the *Symposium* leads us to conclude that philosophy needs an alliance with poetry; with a poetic or rhetorical idiom which can effectively appeal to the passionate faculty of the soul, seducing it into compliance with reason's apprehension of the good. Poetry, we learn from the *Symposium*, is crucial to the erotic or reproductive potential of philosophy.

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1. Introduction

The *Symposium* is a hubristic dialogue. By this I mean to say that this dialogue devoted to a consideration and praise of erotic desire is replete with references to, and images of, arrogant pride and insolent conduct. Hubris makes an early appearance in the prologue to the *Symposium*, as Apollodorus, a fanatical disciple of Socrates, openly expresses his disdain for his companions' affection for wealth, proudly asserting that philosophy alone can show a man the way to genuine happiness (173c-d).[1] In the events and speeches that this fanatical intermediary recounts for his oligarchic comrades, the issue of hubristic striving and its relationship to human *eros* remains a dominant theme: Socrates, we see, brings an uninvited guest to the home of Agathon, appears unconcerned with arriving at the party on time, and insults his gracious host with subtle irony when he does eventually make his entrance in the middle of dinner (174c-d,175d-e). In the eulogy of Eros delivered by Pausanius before this elite gathering, we learn that the Pandemian or sexual *eros* is the source of much insolent and outrageous conduct, compelling mature lovers to seek intercourse with young boys and to "laugh scornfully" at them for their foolishness (181c-d). In his speech, Dr. Eryximachus alerts men to the dangers of *eros* mixed with hubris, identifying this volatile combination as the cause of disease, injustice, and chaos (188a). The comic poet Aristophanes narrates an epic myth recounting how our earliest ancestors, the hubristic circle-men, were punished by Zeus for their arrogant thoughts and their impious assault upon the gods (190b-c). The speech of Diotima that Socrates recreates at the banquet effectively links the passionate faculty of the soul with the hubristic aspiration of man to achieve a divine condition of immortality (207a). And Alcibiades, a notoriously intemperate politician and warrior, barges in upon this sober gathering, establishes himself as leader of the drinking, and proceeds to indict Socrates for his insolent treatment of beautiful young men (212c-d,213e,219c). In light of this, it is difficult to avoid concluding that the question of hubris is an important one for the *Symposium*, one which is intimately connected with the question of erotic passion and its apparent dominance over the human soul.[2]

---

[1] References to the *Symposium* will be incorporated into the body of the essay for the reader's convenience. For the most part, I have relied upon Seth Benardete's unpublished translation of the *Symposium*. This translation is distinguished by its literality, and by its rendering of frequently used terms with consistent English equivalents.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the *Symposium* is its portrayal of a hubristic Socrates. That is, whereas in other dialogues we encounter a Socrates distinguished by his humble profession of ignorance[3], in the *Symposium* we are presented with a Socrates who proudly announces his expertise in knowledge of *erotika*, and who insults the men around him for their ignorance and mendacity (177d,198e-199a). Indeed, in the *Symposium* Socrates is explicitly charged with hubris on five separate occasions by two different speakers (175e,215b,219c,221e,222a), and at one point in the proceedings it is suggested that the philosopher displays absolutely no regard for the goods of others as he pursues his personal good, "intercourse" with beautiful souls (194d). The issue of Socratic hubris, however, culminates in the strange eulogy of the philosopher that Alcibiades delivers to close out this night of celebration. For here, this former associate of Socrates accuses his mentor of extreme hubris and insolence, charging that despite his apparent conformity to conventional opinions and tastes, the philosopher in reality has nothing but contempt for those things which men in the city call beautiful, pleasing, and good. As Alcibiades openly avows, his eulogy of Socrates represents a curious mixture of praise and blame, combining the highest admiration for the philosopher's virtue with a damning condemnation of his hubris, and calling upon the listener (and the reader) to sit in judgement of Socrates'[4] "overweening arrogance" (*hyperephanias*,219c;222a).

This essay, in considering Alcibiades' praise of Socrates in the *Symposium*, will accept the challenge to evaluate the hubris of philosophy and to judge its effect upon non-philosophic men. More specifically, by exploring the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades as it is portrayed the dialogue, this commentary will attempt to assess the philosopher's effect upon certain intensely erotic and spirited men, men who long for glory and political power. As I hope to show, the Alcibiades portrayed in the *Symposium* may be seen as personifying the criticism of Socrates first articulated by Aristophanes in his comedic treatment of the philosopher, *The Clouds*. That criticism, I will argue, amounts to the charge of hubris, and points to the dangerous effects of the philosopher's hubristic striving upon those young men whom he undertakes to educate within the city. As a consequence of his own impiety and his arrogant contempt for the goods cherished by most human beings, Aristophanes suggests, Socrates is the proximate cause of hubris and injustice in the youth, inciting young men to commit wanton and insolent deeds in defiance of sacred law and custom. The Alcibiades we encounter in the *Symposium*, a man who behaves like a perfect tyrant and who recalls for these men his education at the hands of Socrates, thus appears to instantiate the Aristophanic critique of philosophic hubris and its disruptive effect upon the youth. While it may appear intended to vindicate Socrates of the charge that he corrupted the youth[4], the concluding portion of the *Symposium* actually bids us to take seriously the charge that philosophy poses a threat to the integrity of the political community owing to its effect upon men like Alcibiades (222b).

---

[2] Cf. Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Symposium* (Yale U Press, New Haven, 1968), pp.xxxiv-xxxviii. On the connection between hubris and erotic madness, see *Republic*,400b,403a,560e,572c.

[3] See, for instance, *Apology of Socrates*,20e,21b,21d,23b.

Yet, while the speech of Alcibiades does indeed table an indictment of Socratic hubris, it offers a most powerful apology for philosophy nonetheless, contending that as a consequence of Socrates' educational practice young men are permitted to behold the beauty of virtue and the self-sufficient life. Through reflection upon Socrates' unique speeches and personal example, Alcibiades testifies, a prudent man is ennobled or beautified, his *eros* coming to desire that beautiful condition of soul which attends the cultivation of virtue or human excellence. The philosopher's hubris, we are led to conclude, is justified as part of a pedagogic strategy that sublimates the erotic power of young men toward the noble pursuit of virtue, and that accordingly renders assistance to nature in the reproduction of beautiful or noble souls.

In the end, however, the portrait of Alcibiades that we receive in the *Symposium* prohibits our accepting this powerful defence of Socratic hubris without qualification, inasmuch as his tyrannical disposition and his enduring love of popular praise suggests that he ultimately failed to pursue that divine beauty which his reason apprehended in the philosopher's soul and judged to be good. Owing to the influence that his great love of honour and power exerted over his soul, Alcibiades, we see, was incapable of consummating his love for Socrates, or of devoting himself fully to the Socratic example of human virtue. Ultimately, the case of Alcibiades' failure as a lover of virtue compels us to raise certain questions concerning the demands of the philosophic life, the efficacy of Socrates' educational practice, and the relationship between reason and erotic passion in the human soul. It is the character of these questions that this essay will strive to uncover and make explicit.

---

[4] See R.G. Bury, *Plato's Symposium*,2nd edition (Heffer & Sons, Cambridge, 1973),p.lx.

Alcibiades and Socrates

In the *Symposium* we are afforded a rare opportunity to examine Plato's portrayal of a mature Alcibiades, a man at the height of his political and military career, yet only one step away from disaster.[5] According to Bury, the most likely date of the banquet that Apollodorus recounts for his anonymous companions is 416 B.C. -- a year in which Alcibiades was at the zenith of his influence in Athens, able to sway the *demos* with his personal charisma and eloquence in speaking.[6] Yet, only one year later, in 415 B.C., Alcibiades would suffer a great blow to his grand political aspirations, persuading the assembly to launch the naval expedition to Sicily that would result in Athen's most decisive defeat in the war against Sparta, and being implicated in the desecration of the Hermae and the profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries.[7] Hence, the banquet that we see through the eyes of Apollodorus (and those of Aristodemus and Socrates, from whom he heard about the erotic speeches;173b) took place in a turbulent political setting, on the eve of Alcibiades' downfall and his exile from his native city.

---

[5] I.e., the three other dialogues in which Alcibiades appears as either a major interlocutor or supporting character (*Alcibiades I, II, Protagoras*) present us with a youthful Alcibiades who had not yet risen to great status in Athens.

[6] Bury, *Plato's Symposium*,op.cit.,p.lxvi. The date of the banquet must, of course, be distinguished from the dramatic date of Apollodorus' narrative, which, interestingly, falls ca.400-399 B.C. (Bury,lxvi), on the eve of Socrates' trial and execution in Athens on the charges of religious unorthodoxy and the corruption of the youth.

[7] Thucydides, vi.16-18,27-29.

Alcibiades, Plutarch tells us, was a man unlike most.[1] Endowed by nature with magnificent beauty and a formidable will, this extraordinary human being emerged even in his youth as the jewel of Athens, inspiring awe and confidence in those who revelled in his excesses, while incurring the envy and rancour of those who fell prey to his merciless invective and wanton conduct. He was a man naturally driven to excel, to outdo all others and to be first in every contest for prestige and power -- love of glory was the dominant passion of his soul, the source of both his greatness and his downfall. Lascivious and ostentatious (in place of the customary Athenian ensign, his shield bore the image of Eros wielding a thunderbolt), boastful and vain, violent and contemptuous of law, yet at the same time subtle and eloquent, prudent and courageous, generous and a born commander of men, Alcibiades represented an enigmatic combination of opposites who incited ambivalent sentiments on behalf of his fellow Athenians. While the many in Athens took great pride in his military successes throughout Hellas, the oligarchic camp quaked with fear before the tyrannical potential which appeared to reside in his lion-like soul, suspicious that his hunger for power and conquest might eventually be turned upon the very city which reared him.

Alcibiades' conduct, Plutarch observes, displayed many inconsistencies and variations, in accordance with the vicissitudes of his fortunes. As a young man, he demonstrated great talent and intellectual gifts, but was exceeding vain and had a passion for victory at any cost. Once, when he was losing a wrestling match, he bit his opponent to break a hold. When it was suggested to him that he had behaved like a woman, he responded "No, like a lion". He apparently detested flute-playing, and heaped scorn and ridicule upon flautists for the strange look of their faces while they played. Because other young men admired Alcibiades and took his standards to be their own, flute-playing ceased to be respected amongst Athenian youth. Alcibiades earned early in his lifetime a reputation for hubris and insolence. Once, he declined an invitation to attend a symposium at the home of Anytus. Yet, having gotten drunk at home with a gang of revellers, Alcibiades and his comrades invaded Anytus' party, stealing all of the wine and one-half of the gold and silver cups. While the guests were horrified by this insolent violation, Anytus, wishing to avoid the reprisals of this variable man, remarked that Alcibiades had in fact demonstrated great generosity -- after all, he could have taken all the gold and silver.

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[1] The following brief biography of Alcibiades is drawn from Plutarch's "Life of Alcibiades" (*Plutarch's Lives*, trans. John Donne, Modern Library, New York, pp.233-261).

Alcibiades' political ambition was fuelled by his vanity and envy. In 420 B.C., he opposed the peace with Sparta that had been negotiated by Nicias and Laches, apparently not so much because he considered the terms disadvantageous to Athens, but because he felt the Spartans had shown him great disrespect by negotiating the treaty with men other than himself. Through deceitful means and demagoguery, he persuaded the assembly to reject the peace treaty and to elect him general of the Athenian army. While no one who learned of the methods he had employed to secure this personal victory condoned his deceitfulness, nevertheless all were awed by this man's ability to divide and shake all of Peloponnesus, to establish a strong allied opposition to Sparta, and to move the front of the war far from Athenian territory, all in one day. Moreover, while Alcibiades' character and talents seemed perfectly suited to achieving pre-eminence in democratic Athens, during the period of his exile he demonstrated an amazing capacity to adapt to vastly different political settings with relative ease. When, on the Sicilian expedition, Alcibiades learned that he was to be recalled and tried in the assembly on charges of religious crimes, he chose to flee first to Sparta, and then to Persia, rather than to return to Athens where he sensed that his oligarchic enemies would ensure his conviction. In these foreign lands, Alcibiades displayed remarkable chameleon-like powers, accommodating himself to the manners and lifestyles of the native inhabitants, and effectively becoming one of them. Alcibiades, it seems, was a man who could survive and flourish in any environment.

When Athens suffered an oligarchic revolution in 411 B.C., Alcibiades, although still in exile, initiated plans to restore the democracy as the only possible means of securing his return to that city which he considered his own. When the oligarchics were deposed later that same year, among the first items approved by the restored assembly was the recall of

Alcibiades from exile and his assignment as a general in the army. Yet Alcibiades, not wishing to owe his return to popular grace and sympathy, vowed to come back "not with empty hands, but with glory, and some service done"; and to this end, he embarked upon a voyage of conquest which took him throughout Hellas. When he did eventually make his return to Athens, he was greeted by great public acclaim and celebration. He inspired within the Athenians a confidence regarding their fortunes in the war, and they came to view their armies as invincible. Indeed, there were many in Athens who passionately desired that Alcibiades establish himself as their tyrant, putting himself out of reach of the envy of his detractors, and securing the freedom to manage the affairs of the city without fear of being called to account in the assembly. In all aspects of character and behaviour, Alcibiades was clearly the people's choice, the beloved of the multitude.

The fame that Alcibiades acquired in his lifetime was further magnified, his biographer relates, by his association with the philosopher Socrates. Turning aside the gifts and flattery that his beauty invited from Athenians and foreigners alike, Alcibiades made himself a subject of popular wonder by consigning himself to the tutelage of an ugly, cantankerous, and altogether strange man who lacked any regular means of support, and who never tired of chastising the youth for his deficiencies in virtue and his pretentious arrogance. The peerless son of Kleineias, who held the vain opinion of his personal self-sufficiency, and who seemed incapable of feeling love and respect for any man but himself, became captivated by the only man in Athens more enigmatic than himself, prefering the company of a mysterious old philosopher who seemed immune to his physical beauty over the attention of his numerous lovers and sycophants. For his part, Plutarch judges, Socrates seemed intent on taming Alcibiades and rescuing his soul from the many corrupting influences in the city that threatened to bring him to ruin. Through his intercourse with this ambitious man the philosopher sought to sublimate his youthful erotic energy; to educate his mind and passions, and to awaken within him a love of noble glory. Plutarch's retrospective judgement, however, was not shared by many men in Athens at the time, who understood the philosopher's association with Alcibiades to be far from noble in character; indeed, who saw in this altogether suspicious liaison the very source of this young man's contempt for democracy and his tyrannical turn of mind.[9]

These few details about Alcibiades' life and character, and a great deal more, would certainly have been known first-hand to Plato's contemporaries, and would have informed the perspective of any educated reader of the *Symposium* in both ancient and modern times. However, while such external historical evidence serves as a valuable introduction for the reader of the *Symposium*, it is nevertheless (as I hope to show) largely peripheral to our study of the dialogue. For ultimately, the *Symposium*, like all of Plato's dialogues, is more 'poetic' than historical in form and content, and accordingly it aims less at presenting the reader with an historically accurate portrayal of Alcibiades and his relationship with Socrates than at raising as a matter worthy of perennial wonder and reflection the effect of a philosopher upon the youth he undertakes to educate within the political association (184c-185b,187d,210b,222b). As complete as its author wished it to be, the *Symposium* yields the careful reader all the evidence required to develop a theoretical understanding of the *nature* of Alcibiades, and of the permanent political and educational problems occasioned by such an erotic nature. Bearing this in mind, we will turn to the *Symposium*, picking the story up at that point where Aristophanes apparently wished to voice an objection to Socrates' eulogy of Eros.

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[9] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*,I.ii.12.

2. Socratic Hubris and Aristophanic Nemesis

> But 'tis common proof,
> That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
> Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
> But when he once attains the upmost round,
> He then unto the ladder turns his back,
> Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
> By which he did ascend.
>
> Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*,II,i.

In the peroration to his recollection of Diotima's lessons, Socrates claims to have been fully convinced by what this mysterious priestess declared with regard to the nature and deeds of Eros, and he proclaims it his mission to persuade others that *eros* is perhaps the best co-worker or ally with human nature in pursuit of the good. As a measure of the profound influence that Diotima's erotic *logos* exerted, and continues to exert upon Socrates, the philosopher confesses that he now orders both his words and deeds, his speech and his practice, in accordance with her revelations concerning the power (*dynamis*) and courage (*andreia*) of *eros*, and that he honours and trains himself exceptionally in erotic matters as the sole activity befitting a real man (212b-c).

Thus, Socrates' contribution to the evening's rhetorical contest would seem to amount to a curious philosophic 'autobiography': through this historical account which presumably carries us well into the past of Socrates' life, we are permitted to witness the education of the young Socrates, and we are thereby enabled to understand better how the philosopher became what he is.[10] As Socrates remarks at the outset of his encomium, prior to submitting himself to the tutelage of Diotima his *logos* (speech,argument) about such matters as love, beauty, and divinity approximated the *logos* of Agathon, the tragic poet and devotee of Gorgian rhetoric (cf. 201e). But through dialogue with the Mantinean stranger, the young Socrates came to transcend this tragic and sophistic perspective at the same time as he was initiated into the highest mysteries of *eros* and a life dedicated to the singular pursuit of happiness and the good. Whatever it was that Socrates learned about the power of *eros* from his educator, it proved sufficiently persuasive to compel the young philosopher to redirect the course of his life and his subsequent practice of philosophy. As portrayed in the *Symposium*, Diotima's lectures on the subject of the daemonic Eros effected a revolutionary transformation in Socrates' understanding of nature, philosophy, and the human soul, and this grand reversal of perspective had lasting and far-reaching consequences for the philosopher's way of life.

---

[10] We should note, however, that while it accounts for a fundamental revolution in his way of life, the autobiography offered by Socrates before this gathering of urbane men may nonetheless be radically fictitious in character, and Diotima may well be a product of the philosopher's creative or poetic *eros*. Indeed, as Socrates testifies in the *Republic*, whereas the philosopher is no poet (393d), he nevertheless manifests a powerful greed for images (488a), and is not above employing imagery for philosophic and educational ends.

In light of this, it perhaps comes as no surprise that Socrates does not claim his speech to be a eulogy of Eros as had been delivered by the preceding speakers, but rather invites Phaedrus (and, implicitly, the reader) to "give it some other kind of name" (212c). For indeed, while ostensibly devoted to addressing the question "What is *eros*?", we may perceive in the philosopher's *logos* an account of the origin and foundation of Socratic or political philosophy; of the Socratic revolution in philosophy, or the Socratic 'turn' away from the direct study of nature and towards the study of the human or political things. Examined carefully, it seems, Socrates' recollection of his conversion at the hands of Diotima might yield us an appreciation of the Socratic motive in founding political philosophy or political science; an understanding of why Socrates lived as he did, and why he chose to pursue philosophy in the unique manner that he did -- a manner which, we should bear in mind, would ultimately bring him into conflict with the city, and would result in his trial and execution. And curiously, by contrast with the surface portrayal of the philosopher in the *Republic*, the account of philosophy presented in the *Symposium* invites us to attribute this Socratic motive not to a concern to defend justice and public virtue in the *polis*, but rather to a sublimated *eros*, a passionate and all-consuming love of wisdom, the good and immortality.

Some of the symposiasts, we are told, praised Socrates' speech -- a reaction which stands in marked contrast to the universal and tumultuous applause which greeted the encomium of Agathon (198a). However, it is clear that at least one of those present took exception with the Socratic recollection. For at this point in the proceedings, Apollodorus reports, Aristophanes wished to interject a comment, since, we are told, "Socrates, in speaking, had mentioned him and referred to his speech".

Actually, even a cursory review of Socrates' *logos* reveals that this explanation offered by our narrator is only partially true: while Socrates (or, more precisely,Diotima) did indeed allude to and dispute the characterization of *eros* which the poet had advanced (cf.205e), at no point did the philosopher explicitly attribute this account to Aristophanes, or mention the famed comedian by name. Inasmuch as the theme of deficient memory runs throughout the *Symposium* (cf.178a,180c,223c), thereby casting a shadow of incompleteness over this secondhand report of the erotic speeches which we overhear, this editorial slip may be understood as a further instance of faulty recollection on the part of our fanatical intermediaries, Aristodemus and Apollodorus. However, beyond indicating an immediate misremembering, this apparent misstatement perhaps presents us with an instance of Plato's own irony, thereby allowing us to gain access to the dominant issue which arises in the *Symposium* immediately prior to the entrance of the notorious Alcibiades. For this curious reference to Aristophanes directs us towards another memorable Socratic 'autobiography' in which the philosopher does indeed identify the comic poet by name, in what stands as the only other explicit mention of Aristophanes in the whole of the Platonic corpus outside of the *Symposium*. In the *Apology*, in that same passage of his defence speech where Socrates challenges the many to testify whether they have ever heard him discussing divine matters in an unorthodox or impious fashion,the philosopher names Aristophanes as the source of the earlier, implicit indictment of philosophy; as the instigator of the longstanding public slander and hostility against Socrates in particular, and against philosophy in general, through his ridiculous portrayal of the philosopher in his comic drama *The Clouds*.[11] Here in the *Symposium*, then, immediately following Socrates' exposition of the erotic principles which govern his practice of philosophy and his intercourse with human beings, we are given a subtle reminder that not all men are fully satisfied by the philosopher's portrait of his way of life; that certain men, men like Aristophanes who display a preoccupation with piety and justice in the political community (cf.193a-d) and who profess themselves competent to be educators of men owing to their expertise in erotic matters (cf.189d), will have criticisms to level against Socrates and his manner of philosophizing; and, moreover, that their criticisms may strike at the very heart of philosophy's relationship to the city, impugning the civic responsibility of philosophers by charging them with impiety, sophistry, and the subversion of political justice.

---

[11] *Apology of Socrates*,19a-d.

2.1 The Aristophanic Critique of Socrates

As suggested, however, this incident in the *Symposium* is not the first time that the subtle Aristophanes would feel himself compelled to render questionable the speech and character of Socrates. For in *The Clouds* (first produced in 423 B.C., which would be seven years prior to the supposed date of this symposium in honour of Agathon), the comic poet presents to us a Socrates who is truly worthy of our laughter and ridicule; a pale-faced, continent, and effeminate Socrates, strutting and swaggering like a pelican, seemingly oblivious to the human confusion and turmoil which surrounds him. Yet *The Clouds* is more than a laughable parody of the philosopher. It is a serious, even philosophic work in its own right, admittedly the wisest of Aristophanes' comedies, and we must therefore not allow the comic medium of expression to blind us to the profound censure of Socrates and his way of life which is articulated through the play.[12] When we sift through the humour and the invective, when we follow Aristophanes' injunction and view the play as wise spectators, we are able to discern within the fabric of *The Clouds* a thread of sober criticism, a critique of Socrates which pivots upon the philosopher's understanding of the relationship between the horizon of nature and the human or political horizon, and (as premised upon and conditioned by that understanding) his pursuit of philosophic inquiry within the confines of the political association.

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[12] See the parabasis in *The Clouds*, particularly ll.510-24 and ll.575-6.

The Socrates we encounter in *The Clouds* is impious and unjust in the extreme: he undermines the traditional piety of the aged Strepsiades by proclaiming the death of Zeus and the sovereignty of Vortex, he teaches (or allows to be taught) an art of sophistry or Unjust Discourse which subverts the civic administration of justice, and he incites the young and high-spirited Pheidippides to assault his parents in insolent defiance of ancient law and custom. Such is a man who is clearly guilty of the charges upon which he would be tried and sentenced to death; that is, a man who investigates the things aloft, makes the weaker *logos* the stronger, and corrupts the city's youth.[13] But what is most striking about the Aristophanic Socrates -- a feature of his character which most clearly points to the serious residing behind the comic or the laughable -- is the apparent deficiency of his soul, his apparent lack of prudence (*phronesis*) or practical wisdom.[14] Prudence is arguably the political virtue *par excellence*, consisting in the capacity of the mind or rational soul to make those fine judgements which are crucial to civic justice and the good governance of a polity.[15]. Above all else, the prudent man has the capacity for foresight, being able to discern more clearly and accurately than others the consequences which flow from his words and deeds, and taking effective steps to ensure that matters evolve in accordance with his original intent -- the prudent man is able, to the fullest extent possible, to neutralize the role of chance in human affairs. Beyond its overtly political function, however, prudence has a large role to play in piloting the soul of the individual, guiding his behaviour and deportment in his dealings with others, and executing judgements and discriminations which conduce to the actualization of his personal good. Understood most generally, then, prudence is a form of practical reason which is synoptic or architectonic with regard to both the city and the man: it consists in a knowledge of how the polity as a whole would best be arranged internally and conduct its affairs with other cities, and of how the individual soul would best deal with itself and with other souls.[16] In matters of ruling or guardianship, of both communities and oneself, there would seem to be no substitute for prudence or good counsel in men.

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[13] Cf. *Apology of Socrates* , 18b,19b,23d,24b.

[14] Consider Leo Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1966),pp.48-9.

[15] *Symposium*,209a-b; *Republic* ,521b, 582a,d.

[16] *Republic* ,428d, 590d.

Yet inasmuch as it involves the human capacity for judgement and discrimination, prudence would seem inseparable from practical experience with the affairs of men.[17] In making prudential assessments concerning a proposed course of speech or action, in seeking to maximize the praise and minimize the blame that one is likely to provoke by his words and deeds, one necessarily avails himself of his past experience with the souls of men and the passions which move them, as well as his cognizance of social custom and the propriety of speaking or acting in a particular manner in a given context -- only the most imprudent of men would unwittingly praise demons before an audience of the truly pious and devout. Prudence, then, would seem to represent reason's compromise with reality, with the world and men as they are, rather than as they might or should be.

As a direct consequence of the character of his philosophy, however, the Socrates we behold in *The Clouds* lacks this experience with the human things, and he therefore lacks the virtue of prudence. Secluded in the shadows of their "Thinkery", the philosopher and his disciples employ their reason in the investigation of the non-human in nature, and they consider the affairs of men (if they do so at all) only in light of a horizon of understanding derived from the study of beings situated below man in the hierarchy of the natural *kosmos* . Yet, as a pure theoretician or student of nature for whom man is decidedly not the measure of things, the Aristophanic Socrates neglects the study of the human soul. More precisely, he has failed to reflect upon the state of his own soul -- he lacks self-knowledge -- and he remains oblivious to the contexts and conditions within which his study of nature must, of necessity, be pursued; namely, a political community composed of souls that display a diversity of capacities and virtues.[18] Due to his ignorance of the human things and the human soul, this laughable Socrates is unable to make prudent or politic assessments of the natural differences among human beings, and he thus remains incapable of determining which men are suited by nature to receive his philosophic initiation, and which are not. Through his imprudence, Aristophanes' Socrates is led to abdicate his civic responsibility, communicating the principles of his philosophy indiscriminately to all who approach his school, be they young or old, moderate or licentious, just or unjust: negligent of the soul and its passions, of human *eros* and desire, the philosopher is rendered dangerously insensitive to the effects of his rational theology and rhetoric upon the diverse characters of non-philosophic men. Ultimately, the comic poet suggests, by practicing his philosophy with absolute disregard for its non-philosophic or political consequences, Socrates unwittingly creates a situation which is hazardous *both* for the city *and* for philosophy. For in the end, it is not only the sacredness of the family and the principles of civic justice which are assaulted as a consequence of the philosopher's imprudence, but philosophy itself suffers violence at the hands of the many, as the Socratic school is reduced to ruins. Through his imprudence and his refusal to compromise the purity of his reason, Socrates does violence and injustice to the city, to philosophy, and to all who share in his way of life.

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[17] Cf. *Republic* ,582d; and Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I,Chapter 8.

[18] It is both remarkable and revealing that the Socrates of *The Clouds* never once utters the word "soul" (*psyche*).

Yet the Aristophanic critique of Socrates in *The Clouds* would seem to go much deeper than this charge of imprudence. For when torching the Socratic "Thinkery" at the conclusion of the play, in doing violence to philosophy and philosophic men, the indignant Strepsiades (acting with the divine sanction of Hermes) explains his motive by reference to the hubris of Socrates, and he links this hubris directly to the philosopher's irreverent 'scientific' study of nature, to his "looking into the seat of the Moon".[19] Now, hubris is ordinarily associated with excess and immoderation; with a licentiousness which liberates the passions and appetites from the rule of reason, and which leads a man to commit wanton acts of violence and injustice in the pursuit of sensual gratification.[20] Yet beyond this hubris which connotes bodily intemperance, there is a form of hubris which is connected with an immoderation or excess of the soul, and which manifests the rare human ambition to be superior to the gods.[21] In this sublimated form, hubris consists in the overreaching of human limits; it represents the excess of a man who "forgets" the mortal limits on the human form of being, and who measures himself against the glory of the immortals as he strives to erase the distinction between gods and men. Paradoxically, despite the excess and immoderation displayed in such hubristic thought and behaviour, this high form of hubris ultimately constitutes a denial of that very needfulness which seems to define mortal existence, a denial that such a needfulness is endemic and natural to the human (as opposed to the divine) condition. The *hybristes*, the man possessed of a truly sublime ambition and a highminded insolence, desires to become fully self-sufficient and whole; to overcome that erotic incompleteness which *is* man, and to strive with the gods.

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[19] *The Clouds* ,1.1506; cf. with ll.1400-1403,1.1299.

[20] Cf. *Symposium* ,181c,188a; *Republic* ,400b,403a,560e,572c; *Phaedrus*, 237e-238a. See also Xenophon,*Memorabilia*,I.ii.19,II.i.30.

[21] See, for example, Euripides, *Hippolytus*, ll.474-5.

The Aristophanic Socrates would indeed appear to manifest this latter form of hubris, this impious ambition. Drawn by his scientific inquiry to concern himself with the things of nature, the philosopher desires to comprehend the world, the natural universe and man's place in it, as a god might -- he desires to think *what*, and thus *as*, the gods think. No subject, including the nature of the divine itself, is forbidden to this Socrates. He refuses to rest content with nature's secrets, with the fact that certain dimensions of the *kosmos* are meant by the gods to remain mysterious to men as a precondition of their religiosity, and he seeks to unriddle and explain these secrets as matters of natural law or the mechanistic regularities which govern the world. Yet through his hubris and impiety, through directing his gaze upwards and seeking to comprehend (indeed, to transcend) the divine mind, the philosopher visibly separates himself from human concerns. Our first encounter with Socrates in the play has him suspended high above the earth in a basket, "treading on air and contemplating the sun", and discounting human affairs as suitable topics of philosophic inquiry.[22] The Socrates of *The Clouds* is unable to appreciate the role of piety and convention in civil life. Indeed, his preoccupation with the supra-divine, with the master design of nature which superintends even the gods worshipped by men, causes him to scorn the human things as ephemeral and transient, as unworthy of his rational attention. Socrates' imprudence and lack of civic responsibility are indeed consequences of his manner of philosophizing, but this pursuit of wisdom in turn represents the highest form of hubris. It is thus the hubris of philosophy which is the true cause of the philosopher's endangering both the city and his own way of life, insofar as it is this aspiration to superhuman wisdom which compels him to disregard those affairs of men which must be of concern to the prudent man as the conditions within which philosophy must come into being and exist. The Aristophanic charge against Socrates is thus at root a charge of hubris. And the comic poet's judgement on this form of impious ambition, we suspect, is humorously portrayed in the report delivered at one point in *The Clouds* by a pupil of the philosopher: As Socrates gazed upwards one night to investigate the courses and revolutions of the moon, a lizard crapped on his head: a fitting way of indicating that men should not attempt to usurp the power and station of the gods, but should be pious and accept ignorance of the highest things as the lot of mortal beings.[33]

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[22] *The Clouds* ,ll.218-34.

But how does the charge of Socratic hubris levelled by Aristophanes in *The Clouds* bear on the *Symposium*? Judging by all appearances, the Socrates who is parodied and chastised in the comedy is the "pre-Socratic" Socrates; it is the Socrates who studied natural phenomena, who had not yet initiated his turn to the human things and made the virtue of man the dominant theme of his *logos*. If, as suggested above, the recollection of Diotima's teaching on *eros* advanced by Socrates in the *Symposium* accounts for a fundamental revolution in the philosopher's understanding of man and nature, and articulates the principles which persuaded (compelled?) Socrates to "call philosophy down from the heavens and set her into the cities of men", then the Aristophanic criticism of Socratic philosophy as it appears in *The Clouds* would seem to lose its force and pertinence. If Socrates indeed turned to the human things and placed the soul of man at the centre of his philosophic inquiry, then he would seem to have eliminated that crucial defect in his philosophy that is pointed to by his comic nemesis.

However, if we look more closely at the specific point of divergence between the Aristophanic and Socratic/Diotimaic accounts of *eros* in the *Symposium*, we are led to the curious conclusion that the private criticism of Socrates that the comic poet must have wanted to advance at this point in the dialogue is virtually identical to that which emerges from his public parody of the philosopher in *The Clouds*.[24] For while it may well account for the turning of philosophy to the human things and human concerns, the erotic *logos* presented and endorsed by Socrates before his fellow symposiasts is nonetheless a portrait of extreme hubris. Inasmuch as it identifies erotic passion as the prime mover of philosophy, as the master desire of the soul which impels the lover of wisdom beyond the conventional horizon of the city and its justice in pursuit of a personal good, the erotic doctrine of the Mantinean stranger conjoins *eros* and hubris, love and the desire to attain a god-like self-sufficiency. In Diotima's higher mysteries, the perfect revelations (*ta telea epoptika*) suited only for the most capable initiates, the philosopher emerges as both *erastes* and *hybristes*, as both a lover of the purest form of beauty and a seeker of divine immortality through the generation of superhuman virtue. In order to appreciate Aristophanes' desire to rebut the philosopher's *logos*, and thereby to grasp the necessity of Alcibiades' irruption into the argument and the action of the *Symposium*, we must turn to a closer examination of Diotima's discourse, and to the conjunction of *eros* and hubris in the stranger's depiction of the philosophic soul.

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[33] *The Clouds* , ll.169-74. Cf. with *Symposium* , 193a-d.

2.2 Eros and the Hubris of Philosophy

Having compelled Agathon to admit his ignorance regarding the intrinsic beauty of Eros, Socrates proceeds to recall for these men a time from his past when his own ignorance about *erotika* was rectified by a woman, Diotima of Mantinea (201d). Ignoring the most obvious way in which an older and more experienced woman might teach a naive young man about the divine mysteries of *eros*, Socrates recapitulates the *conversations* about love and beauty that he had with this wise priestess on several occasions. Thus, whereas this eulogistic competition was set in motion by the proposal that each man present should recite a beautiful oration in honour of Eros, and whereas Socrates was the first to lend his support to this motion (177a-e), the philosopher nevertheless departs from the terms of the initial agreement in his speech, offering a lengthy dialogic encounter in place of a rhetorical or poetic monologue.

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[24] See Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* , sections 13 and 17,and Leo Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* , pp.7-8. Through this discussion of *The Clouds*, I have attempted to suggest that the relationship between this work and the *Symposium* is an intimate one. As further evidence of this relationship, and of the subterranean dialogue taking place between the two associates of Socrates who authored these works, consider the following: both works are concerned to address the hubris of Socrates and Socratic philosophy; the *Symposium* is the only dialogue of Plato's in which Aristophanes, the famed accuser of Socrates, appears in person; and (perhaps the most revealing point for our present purposes) the young Pheidippides who is corrupted by Socrates in *The Clouds* is in actuality a pale caricature of the historical Alcibiades, being preoccupied with horse matters and chariot races, and speaking with a discernable lisp (cf.ll.14-16,27,74,83,862,1381).

The Erotic Middle

In both Diotima's discourse and the dialogue between Socrates and Agathon which precedes it, we learn that Eros is not, after all, beautiful, as the tragic poet had asserted it to be. Inasmuch as *eros* is "love of" something, the lover necessarily lacks, or is deficient in the possession of, that which his *eros* is of, or that towards which his erotic passions drive him (200a-e); and, as it is beauty which incites man's erotic longings, it follows that *eros*, as love with regard to the beautiful, is not itself beautiful, but rather lacks *that* beauty which it longs to possess (201a-b,202b).[25] While intended to demonstrate that *eros* resides mid-way between beauty and ugliness, we should note that this argument further reveals to us that *eros* is essentially selfish and acquisitive by nature. Emerging from a condition of radical insufficiency or needfulness, the erotic impulse is not altruistic as Agathon had contended, but instead it manifests the lover's desire to acquire that which conduces to his *own* happiness, namely the beautiful and the good (204d-205a). Moreover, as an impulse directed towards rectifying, and thus towards eliminating, a condition of self-incompleteness, *eros* emerges in this account as an impulse to motion or activity, as a motive energy of the lover which is antithetical to rest or peace in the soul.[26] As one discerning commentator has characterized it, Diotima's *eros* represents the daimonic "intentionality" of mortal existence[27]: his *eros* aroused by beauty, the lover is impelled towards the object of his passions, desiring to appropriate to himself that which he lacks, and refusing to abort his erotic quest short of its acquisition. Contrary to Agathon's contention that the divine Eros is productive of peace and friendship (195c), the daemonic *eros* of Diotima appears more as a restless desire for power after power; as an acquisitive impulse rooted in the nature of animate being, which imparts motion and vitality to an otherwise inert state. These two unspoken premises regarding the nature of *eros* -- its essential selfishness and acquisitiveness, and its connection with motion and change as opposed to rest and permanence -- must be born in mind as we proceed further into the stranger's enigmatic account.

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[25] We must note that, at least superficially, this argument derived from Diotima and employed by Socrates to prove that *eros* is not beautiful is patently sophistic. Following its summation, one would have to conclude, for example, that a handsome man never loved a beautiful woman, or that the beautiful Alcibiades never loved Socrates, within whom he saw an incomparable beauty. The sophistry enters the argument at 201b, where Agathon is compelled to agree that if some X loves some Y that is beautiful, then X, as a lover who lacks and desires to possess Y, is lacking in beauty altogether. Clearly, this *logos* erroneously construes the *instance* of beauty as consummate beauty, or falsely asserts that no beauty can be partial. However, what we wish to say in this case is that the object of the lover's *eros* is beautiful, that the lover therefore longs to possess that particular instance of beauty that he lacks, and that the lover is therefore deficient in the possession of *some* beauty, but not all. Only in this way can we account for a man like Alcibiades, who is simultaneously most beautiful and possessed by a most powerful *eros*. (Cf. Martha Nussbaum, "The Speech of Alcibiades: A Reading of Plato's *Symposium*", *Philosophy and Literature*,v.3,1979,pp.131-72).

From Diotima's discussion of the nature of *eros* we learn that love is at once a metaphysical and psychological phenomenon or principle. *Eros* is the middle thing (*to metaxu*) residing in the intermediate realm between the mortal and the immortal, being neither man nor god but a great daemon. Couched in suitably theological language, Diotima's description of the power of this daemonic being emphasizes the unity or togetherness to which the erotic impulse aspires: the divine does not have direct intercourse with the human, nor the human with the divine; rather, the daemonic Eros bridges the chasm which divides the mortal and the immortal realms, "interpreting and ferrying to gods things from human beings, and to human beings things from gods", and "filling up" the interval between the two such that the whole is bound together with itself (202e-203a). Hence, in agreement with Eryximachus (cf.186a-b), Diotima expands the horizon of *eros* to embrace the whole of the natural *kosmos*. While erotic passion undeniably has the power to cause a most frightful disorder in human and non-human life (207a-b), *eros*, the stranger suggests, is at root a principle of order or attraction in animate nature, ensuring an essential connection between the mortal and the immortal as it serves to bind together the "historical" world of generation and decay with the trans-historical realm of permanent form. Passionate love, of the kind which causes beings to desire to associate or 'be together' with one another, exerts its influence to the very core of animate existence, and the union or interpenetration of form and matter in the perceptible or sentient realm, in the "middle world" of experience, may thus be understood as essentially erotic in character.[28] Having the power to render a plurality a unity, *eros* is that intermediate dynamism which imparts a synthetic oneness to the diversity of particulars in nature, and which thereby causes the natural world to cohere as a true *uni*verse. The Hesiodic couplet invoked by Phaedrus to open the evening's praise of Eros would thus appear to be ratified by Diotima's *logos*: *eros* is indeed a regulative principle of nature, binding together the changeable and the permanent, and introducing cosmic order into a primordial chaos (cf.178b).[29]

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[26] For an interesting and insightful discussion of this dimension of Diotima's *eros* , and of its role in the overall drama of the dialogue, see Roger Hornsby, "Significant Action in the *Symposium*", *The Classical Journal*, v.52, 1956, pp.37-40.
[27] Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Symposium* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1968),p.4.

But by far the greatest emphasis in Diotima's teaching is placed upon the psychological dimension of *eros*, or upon the role of *eros* as a master desire of the soul and a directive principle of human activity. Owing to his generation through Poros and Penia, resourcefulness and poverty, the daemonic Eros is characterized by an incessant needfulness which places his nature mid-way between mortal incompleteness and divine self-sufficiency (203b-204a). As a principle of the mortal soul, then, Diotima's *eros* has its origin in a lack of self-sufficiency, and it represents in itself a yearning for completeness, a longing of mortal beings to be perfect and whole like the immortal gods.

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[28] The sexual transmission of the distinctive 'look' (*eidos*) of a being to its offspring may be understood as a basic instance of this erotic union of form and matter in the perceptible realm (cf.208e). Through sexual or procreative activity, members of a species impose their genotype upon inert matter, thereby reproducing their form (with, of course, a substantial degree of variation, yet nevertheless with a surprising degree of similarity). Hence, erotic (i.e., reproductive) activity would appear to consist in the exercise of creative (or, for that matter, destructive) power, in the imposition of form upon matter by the erotic agent.

[29] Cf. Hesiod, ***Theogony***, ll.116-7. Yet consider also ll.120-2:"...then Eros, surpassing every immortal in beauty,/ who, a loosener of limbs, brings all immortals and mortals / under his power, and makes them unable to think as they should."

Despite many obvious similarities, the Diotimaic account of the erotic incompleteness of human beings thus differs markedly from the tragic incompleteness that Aristophanes had attributed to human nature earlier in the *Symposium*. For the priestess denies that it is the desire of each soul to find its unique complement, its distinctive other half, which is the source of human eroticism (205e), but rather the analysis she provides to the young Socrates suggests that *eros* originates in the very mortality of man (indeed, of all mortal creatures), or in the fact that human life is bounded and structured by a horizon of temporality. Unlike both the divine (which enjoys a being eternal) and utter nothingness, mortal beings reside in the 'middle world' of genesis or becoming, and both individuals and species are forever coming-into-being and passing away. Man is a being who is born with death as an inevitable certainty, and this temporal limitation on his being in the world serves as a constant and painful reminder of the divide which separates his nature from that of the immortal gods he worships. Yet human nature will not rest content with this temporal deficiency or incompleteness. Recoiling from death as the temporal end which 'finishes off' human being, man pursues a superhuman immortality through (literally) 'poetry', through the making or producing (*poesis*) of things which occupy the world external to the soul of the maker and which may survive him after he has succumbed to his mortality; things which extend the individual identity of the self through space and time (cf.205b-d). This poetic pursuit of immortality, the unwillingness of man to simply accept his fundamental mortality and the attempt to approximate eternal being through procreative activity, is what Diotima calls *eros*, the principal motor of all animate existence.

Man is thus an erotic being inasmuch as he is an 'historical' being. Strung like a rope over an abyss between not being and being eternal, man resides within the intermediate realm of historicity or temporality, being himself a curious erotic union of form and matter, body and soul (cf.207d-e). But unlike sub-human forms of life which share occupancy of the historical realm, man is blessed (cursed?) with a consciousness of his mortality: he alone entertains notions of the infinite and the immortal and of his distance from these trans-temporal states of being, and consequently he alone of the beings can *consciously* strive to transcend the temporal horizon of life through 'poetic' activity.[30] In Diotima's account, then, *eros* would appear to be essentially hubristic in all of its diverse manifestations: as an instinctual impulse which drives a human being to seek immortality through procreation or generation in beauty (206e), *eros* represents the human longing to commune with the divine, to achieve a condition of self-sufficiency and eternal being. All erotic motion, all erotic activity, is at root directed towards a hubristic self-overcoming or self-negation; towards the transcendence of motion and change and the attainment of rest and permanence; towards usurping the station of the divine.

In a claim that is likely to strike us as more than slightly paradoxical, Diotima identifies philosophy, the love and pursuit of wisdom, as the paradigm of the poetic and hubristic *eros*. Whereas Socrates would argue in Book X of the *Republic* that philosophy and poetry remain fundamentally irreconcilable due to their respective relationships to nature, or due to the fact that the former aims at a rational discovery of nature's fundamental architecture while the latter seeks to fashion a beatific horizon of convention which masks nature from the view of men, the Mantinean stranger here conflates these two human endeavours, pronouncing philosophy the exemplification of poetry or making, the highest manifestation of erotic activity which strives to create immortal virtue through genesis in beauty. The needfulness of human beings, the longing for wholeness and immortality which informs the human consciousness, is epitomized, the priestess declares, by the philosopher, whose painful awareness of his deficiency in beauty/nobility (*to kalon*)[31] and goodness compels him to pursue wisdom as one of the most beautiful things, and to make himself open to the whole of the *kosmos* which transcends his particular circle of experience and personal attachments.

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[30] This in no way means to suggest that most men are conscious of their essential eroticism, or of the erotic character of their activity (i.e., that it aims at immortality), but simply that man is unique among forms of animate life in that he has the *potential* to consciously pursue the transcendence of mortality, and to make this erotic striving a matter of conscious or philosophic reflection. Indeed, in the taxonomy of lovers which Diotima later provides for Socrates, the vast majority of men (208e-212a), being lovers of bodies who instinctively pursue immortality through physical procreation, would appear to share more in common with the beasts than they do with the higher kinds of lovers--the poets proper, the legislators, and the philosophers--who are "pregnant in soul" (cf.with 207a-d).

[31] To preserve the multiple meanings of the Greek *to kalon*, I shall henceforward render it as beauty/nobility. The range of *to kalon* is great, extending from instances of physical beauty to what we might refer to as nobility in men and deeds -- the Greeks saw an essential beauty in virtue or excellence. This dual sense of *kalon* must be born in mind when studying Socrates' recollection, and when

In teaching knowledge of *eros* to Socrates, then, Diotima implicitly exhorts the young philosopher to acquire self-knowledge; to gain an awareness of his lack of self-sufficiency in beauty/nobility and virtue as a precondition to genuine philosophizing, or to the pursuit of genuine psychic completeness. Most men, the stranger maintains, lacking beauty/nobility, goodness, and intelligence, are precisely for that reason of the opinion that they are self-sufficient in these qualities of soul, and consequently that they are in need of nothing: in their vulgar ignorance the many are oblivious to their vulgarity and lack of completeness, and believe that they have no need to pursue the virtues characteristic of the true or natural gentleman (*kalos kagathos*;lit.:"a noble and good man"). As a prerequisite to the pursuit of wisdom and the noble virtue it spawns, there must be a liberation from this ignorance -- a recognition of the soul's deficiency with respect to virtue must precede the erotic quest for that which is lacking. This conjunction of *eros* and self-knowledge in Diotima's teaching would thus appear to make some sense of Socrates' seemingly hubristic claim in the *Symposium* that he possesses expert knowledge of erotic matters (177d).[32] For ultimately, knowledge of *eros* translates into a self-conscious awareness that one has but incomplete (i.e.,'erotic') opinions regarding the highest questions, and that one consequently is lacking in wisdom or knowledge of the virtues which conduce to gentlemanliness: to know *eros* is to know that one *knows* nothing, and Socrates' highly unusual assertion of expert understanding is, ironically, equivalent to his customary and humble profession of ignorance (cf.198d). To know the erotic things is to expose the horizon of opinion as *mere* opinion, as thought which

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[31](cont'd) attempting to unravel Alcibiades' ambiguous praise of the daemonic philosopher.

[32] Cf. also *Theages*, 128b, where Socrates claims more skill in *erotika* than anyone else of the past or present. Presumably this claim would encompass Diotima as well! We should also note that while the philosopher first claims in the *Symposium* that he has expert knowledge (*epistasthai*) of erotic matters, he later speaks of his being 'clever' (*deinos*) in *erotika* (198c-d). *Deinos* may also mean 'awesome' or 'terrifying'.

pertains to the intermediate realm of becoming, and which remains incomplete with respect to the being of the virtues. To know *eros* is to be drawn to philosophize in the attempt to transcend the incompleteness of opinion and the opinable realm through the acquisition of knowledge. Even lovers of truth, it seems, are in need of gadflies to sting them to wakefulness if they are to avoid complacency and the temptations of comforting dogmatism.[33]

Love, Beauty, and the Good

To fulfill his *eros*, Diotima tells the young Socrates, the lover, whether he be philosophic or non-philosophic by nature, must undertake to discharge his erotic power through procreation or generation in beauty/nobility. Contrary to common opinions on the matter, the priestess now asserts, *eros* is not fundamentally a love *of* the beautiful/noble for itself, nor is it a desire for that other half which, if acquired, would render one whole; rather, *eros* is at root the love and pursuit of the good, which alone brings happiness to a human being (204e-205a,205d-e). *Eros* is indeed teleogical or goal-directed in character, yet its goal or end (*telos*) is the good (*to agathon*) rather than the beautiful/noble (*to kalon*): beautiful things and human beings may incite passionate (and painful) longings in the soul of the lover, and prompt him to pursue the beauty which so inspires him, yet what the *eros* of the lover really desires and wishes to possess is the good and the immortality which accrues to one through procreation in beauty. While it appears as love in regard to the beautiful/noble, *eros* is in actuality love of "engendering and bringing to birth in the beautiful/noble" and love of "the good's being one's own always" (206e-207a).

Thus, inasmuch as its work or function (*ergon*) is to attain "immortality with good" for the lover, *eros*, we might say, is love of the beautiful/noble only incidentally or instrumentally. Owing to the character of *eros*, Diotima maintains, human nature instinctively or unconsciously longs to "give birth" or to procreate, yet it lacks the power (*ou dunatai*) to do so in ugliness. Engendering or procreation (*genesis*), she tells the young Socrates, is immortal or divine in itself, and only the beautiful/noble is fitting for the divine; consequently, it is only the beautiful/noble which makes possible the transition from erotic "pregnancy" to "childbirth", or which allows the lover to create those poetic products which immortalize his will (206c-e).[34] The lover's innate *eros* of the good, and his love of eternal being as one of the greatest goods, craves for external vessels through which it might discharge its power and create immortalizing offspring; and for this procreative purpose it is instinctively drawn towards the beautiful/noble, and repelled by the ugly/shameful (*aischros*). The end of *eros* is the possession of the good in perpetuity, and the beautiful/noble is desired and sought after as the *means* or the *instrument* through which this immortality may be pursued.

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[33] Note Diotima's reprovals of Socrates' ignorance of erotic matters (201e,204b,207c). Indeed, this harsh educator is not above laughing openly at her pupil's obtuseness (202c;cf.219c).

This point of Diotima's speech--the point to which Aristophanes apparently wished to object--is exceedingly strange. Indeed, judging from the evidence that the priestess offers to the young Socrates as proof of her assertion that *eros* wills the good, one is tempted to conclude that this woman never associated with human beings, and that she accordingly remained ignorant of the passions which move men's souls. For Diotima here suggests to Socrates that man's rational desire to possess the good necessarily and always rules over his passionate attraction to beautiful and pleasurable things, and to those things which he considers his own. Human beings, she claims, would willingly have their limbs amputated if they considered them to be base or harmful (*ponera*)--no man cleaves to his own things unless he also judges those things to be good, or at least good for him (205e). Yet clearly, this analysis concentrating upon physical health or the goods of the body ignores the human fondness for the things which are familiar or one's own irrespective of a rational assessment of their inherent goodness. Indeed, while a man might willingly part with his limbs and organs if he recognized them to be harmful, it is unlikely that he would so easily dissociate himself from his children, for example, if he came to a realization that they were bad or evil. In fact, his fondness for his children and the pleasure they bring him might well prejudice his judgement regarding their inherent goodness or badness. Men love their own--their own families, their own polities, their own ways of life--and they implicitly hold that such familiar things and points of reference represent the good. This primary identification of the good with one's own would seem both natural and beneficial, inasmuch as it imparts integrity both to the family and civil society, and serves as the source of strong friendships. Contrary to Diotima's explicit teaching regarding *eros* in human life, men are not compulsively rational. Their attraction to things which appear beautiful and which please them is rarely submitted to the tribunal of reason for a judgement regarding the goodness or virtue of their beloved; indeed, the man who pauses in the middle of his seduction of a beautiful woman to reflect upon her virtue or goodness is likely to forfeit the very beauty and pleasure he longed to acquire. While reason clearly exerts a power over the passionate faculty of the soul, it often proves unable to keep a man from pursuing things which are pleasing despite the harm that these things and the pursuit might ultimately cause him.

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[34] It is a most curious feature of Diotima's teaching that the intercourse follows rather than precedes "pregnancy": all humans (206c), indeed all mortal natures (207d), be they male or female, are pregnant with either physical or psychic "offspring", and at a certain erotic prime they long to give birth through intercourse with the beautiful/noble.(Cf. Harry Neumann, "Diotima's Concept of Love", *American Journal of Philology*, 86(1), 1965). That is, Diotima either eliminates the fertilization role usually ascribed to the male and thereby makes love exclusively a "woman's game", or she collapses the distinction between male and female roles in procreation and renders *eros* androgynous, just like that ancient "third face" that Aristophanes spoke of.

Hence, in asserting that human beings (unlike animals;cf.207b) display a rational indifference to their own and to things which please them, Diotima justifies Socrates description of her as a perfect *sophistes* or "wise one" (208c). For Diotima's account of the human love of beauty and the good is appropriate for a hyper-rational being, a being devoid of the irrational loves which move most men, yet it fails to account for the apparent tension between reason and passion in the souls of less rational beings. While such a rational stance toward the good might well represent the ideal towards which human beings should aim, nevertheless it obscures the primary identification of the good with the pleasing and one's own which actually prevails among more complex souls, among beings possessing spiritedness and appetitive desire in addition to reason. Diotima apparently sees no tension between reason and erotic passion in the human soul, yet our natural awareness of the divisions within ourselves reveals to us the limitations of her analysis. It may well be that no man pursues a beauty that he does not also consider to be good, but this does not further entail that all men have knowledge about what is truly good (or even good for them), or that they even care to devote their reason to addressing this question. Whereas Diotima claims that human beings love only those beautiful things which *are* good, reflection upon the actual behaviour of men reveals that the human animal's perception of the good is often biased by his attraction to beauty and pleasure. In short, for men who fail to attain Diotima's high standards of rationality, pleasure itself counts as one of the greatest goods. That Aristophanes wished to object to Diotima's *logos* suggests that the comic poet recognized the crucial defect in the stranger's account of *eros*, and that unlike this perfect wise one he understands that the love of one's own and the love of the good itself rarely harmonize in human life.

Philosophy and the Erotic Turn

In the higher mysteries which conclude Socrates' recollection, Diotima portrays the philosophic lover's ascent towards the beautiful itself (*auto to kalon*) in his pursuit of immortality with the good. In order to generate that true virtue which alone makes a man friendly or dear to a god (*theophilei*) and immortal, Diotima maintains, the lover must sublimate his *eros*, directing it from the material to the immaterial; from bodies to souls, and ultimately towards a truly divine form of beauty which is "pure, clean, unmixed", itself neither erotic nor bounded by space and time. Philosophy is thus the highest expression of the poetic or procreative *eros* in man and nature, as it alone of all ways of life or erotic orientations allows a human being to 'have intercourse with' (*sunontos*;lit: 'be with') this divine beauty itself, and thereby to give birth to true virtue rather than merely its phantom images (211e-212a). As the love and pursuit of wisdom, the *eros* of the philosopher is ultimately indifferent to the historical or temporal realm in which human life unfolds, and to the goods pursued by men within that 'middle world' (cf.211d), for it channels its power upwards, aiming at a transcendent apprehension of the permanent beings which structure and animate the intermediate world of incessant becoming.

Yet inasmuch as his *eros* is most sublime, inasmuch as his erotic pursuit proceeds by way of dialectical understanding and terminates in an intellection of architectonic ideas (212a), the philosopher would appear to be the most hubristic of lovers. By making his soul truly virtuous and self-sufficient through noetic intercourse with the beautiful/noble itself, Diotima tells Socrates, the lover of wisdom may become a friend to a god, and immortal as well *as far as this is possible* for a human being. But true friendship, a friendship which transcends mere pleasure or utility and which expresses a true community of sentiment, necessarily presumes a harmony of perspectives and a measure of equality. This highest form of friendship presumes that the friends or lovers value similar ends, and that they remain roughly equal in the talents and virtues which conduce to achieving those ends, if they are to sincerely pursue some good in common while maintaining mutual respect and admiration.[35] To the extent that he wishes to divorce himself from human beings and become a friend to a god, then, the philosopher desires, and presumes himself capable of achieving, equality with the divine; he desires to unite the divine component of his soul, his reason, with the beings which order the natural universe, and thereby to understand the world in the way that only a god might. With his *eros* impelling him towards synoptic wisdom, the philosophic lover is driven to the excesses of hubris and impiety, striving to overcome the erotic incompleteness of human being by acquiring a divine understanding of the *kosmos*.

However, while his *eros* may be unique in its intensity or power, and in the route which it traverses in search of self-overcoming, the philosophic lover depicted by Diotima shares an essential commonality with all lesser erotic men. For whereas the *telos* of the philosopher's reason consists in the union of mind and nature, in the apprehension of the being of the beautiful which has a purely formal ontology, the *telos* of his *eros* resides beyond this wisdom or complete understanding, and consists in the immortality and the good which result from psychic intercourse with divine beauty. As with all lovers, the *eros* of the philosopher longs to possess the good (*to agathon*) and immortal being, and the knowledge, the acquisition of understanding through reason, that he is able to achieve with regard to the beautiful/noble itself is merely instrumental to the erotic pursuit. That is, on Diotima's account, wisdom is decidedly *not* the end of philosophy. The vision or understanding of the beings is to be valued and sought after by the philosopher for its reproductive potential and capacity; for its use as a receptacle in which he might discharge his erotic power, and through which he might generate in himself the highest virtue that would make him dear to and equal with the gods. Philosophy, it seems, must ultimately be understood as the quest for the good, as a pursuit which yields knowledge of the best life for a human being. Reason thus appears as epiphenomenal of the instinctual *eros* which resides at the core of even the philosopher's soul, and the quest for a rational apprehension of the trans-historical in nature as but a means to transcending the temporal or erotic incompleteness of human life.[34]

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[35] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156b7-30,1158a1, 1159b25-35.

As Diotima portrays this ascent to the vision of the divine beautiful itself, it is clear that the lover must initiate his pursuit of immortalizing virtue by associating with and studying the human things, human beings and their cities (cf.210c). A lover of wisdom may acquire access to the trans-historical idea of beauty, the priestess instructs Socrates, only through the "correct practice of pederasty" (211c); only by loving and having intercourse with beautiful/noble youth, and by beholding the beautiful/noble in human pursuits, laws, and sciences. That is, the philosophic attempt to ascend beyond the realm of historicity which orders human life requires that the lover begin his ascent from within that temporal horizon, taking as suitable subjects for rational inquiry the material and formal properties of the 'middle world' which participate somehow in the being of the beautiful as images or shadows. The erotic pursuit of true virtue and happiness, of true self-sufficiency, thus demands that one "work through" the human things: to borrow an image from the *Republic*, the philosopher must turn his reason to the cave-life of the city for the sake of, in the end, transcending that shadowy domain of human opinion. Knowledge of *eros* ultimately entails that the philosopher recognize his lack of self-sufficiency in making his ascent from the cave; that he acquire an awareness of his essential dependency upon the human things, and upon the political association in which human life unfolds.

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[34] Neumann, "Diotima's Concept of Love", pp.42-3.

Here, then, we would seem to be provided an account of the Socratic 'turn'; of that Socratic revolution in philosophy which established the sovereignty of *political* philosophy. To acquire that clear vision of beauty/nobility which alone conduces to immortality, the philosopher must first direct his *eros* downwards towards the cities of men, and begin by loving human bodies and human souls in order that he might ascend from there to a purely formal understanding of the beautiful. Philosophy's turn to the human things -- an epistemological turn which is fundamentally erotic in character -- would thus seem premised upon an ontological connection between the human and the 'divine' in the natural universe; a connection between the being of man and the superhuman ideas or beings which provide the architecture for all of nature. With regard to the most important questions, questions concerning virtue and nobility, nature would appear to grant the mind no direct access to what *is* in truth, but rather demands of man that he come to apprehend the being of such things through sustained inquiry into the political affairs of human beings. The study of fleas, gnats, and the revolutions of the moon will not yield the philosopher the divine wisdom which his *eros* craves, for only the human things can grant the mind access to that which transcends the human.[37]

But how are we to understand this ontological connection, such that philosophy must of necessity be practiced as political philosophy, or as a philosophy concerned with the affairs and virtues of men? Inasmuch as it is the relationship between the human form of being and the *ideas* which grounds philosophy's erotic turn, then this connection would appear to be one which is mediated by reason or the rational soul. Of the forms of life which occupy the middle or historical world, man alone has the capacity for self-conscious reflection: the uniqueness of human nature consists in man's possession of the power of speech and reason (*logos*), and in the fact that he is the only being for whom justice, nobility, and the good are matters of deliberation and conscious action. Possessing reason in addition to the passionate and appetitive faculties, the human form of being thus comprehends in its nature the attributes of all lower orders of life -- man is the being who occupies the apex of the natural order. In order to comprehend the nature of nature itself, to acquire an understanding of the very form of the natural world, then, one must initiate one's investigation with human being, that being which incorporates the properties of all inferior forms of being, and the only being for whom the nature of the beings is itself an issue. The human and political things, while for all practical purposes autonomous, nevertheless remain theoretically dependent upon the subhuman and the superhuman in nature, and thus the attempt to acquire a synoptic understanding of the natural universe must *begin* from that which is better known to man; it must begin with man himself, the most complex of beings, who occupies the apex of the natural hierarchy, who alone desires to know, and who alone makes nature herself a subject of speech and thought.[38]

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[37] See *The Clouds*, ll.140-173.

Yet man is distinctively political. His very needfulness, his eroticism, propels him into a common or shared way of life in political association[39], and his lack of divine virtue requires that he make laws and decrees to govern this common way of life and to enforce standards of public justice. To study the human things as a route to acquiring a transcendent understanding of the beings consequently entails that one investigate the political setting of human life. It demands that one study the *polis* in which man becomes distinctively human, in which the full variety of human nature is put on display, and in which human beings deliberate and make known their opinions on questions of justice, nobility and the good. As Socrates remarks in the *Phaedrus*, that other dialogue devoted to a consideration of Eros, the trees in the countryside can teach him nothing of importance to a human being, whereas men in the cities are able to offer him this valuable instruction.[40] It is thus more than prudence which demands of philosophy that it compromise the purity or abstractness of reason and become self-consciously 'political' in character. The very order of the *kosmos*, the erotic connection between the human soul and the first principles of nature which secures a continuity between the divine and the mortal, compels genuine lovers of wisdom to "call philosophy down from the heavens and set her into the cities of men" as the only possible path to the attainment of a trans-political and trans-temporal understanding. For the sake of ascending from the cave, Diotima teaches Socrates, the philosophic lover must first make cave reality, the distinctively human realm of speech and opinion, the subject of his philosophical inquiry and the object of his erotic drive.

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[38] Consider the following from Allan Bloom, commenting on Leo Strauss' pursuit of philosophy after the fashion of Socrates: "Without forgetting being, he turned away from its contemplation to the contemplation of man--who is both the being capable of longing to know being and the most interesting of the beings, the one which any teaching about being must most of all comprehend. To begin with the human things, to save them from reduction to the non-human and to understand their distinctiveness, was the Socratic way."("Leo Strauss",*Political Theory*,2(4), November 1974,p.377).

[39] *Republic*, 369b ff.

[40] *Phaedrus*, 230d:"You must pardon me, o best one. For I am a lover of learning; but on the one hand, the things of the country and the trees do not

Yet, at the same time as it accounts for the Socratic motive in founding political philosophy, Diotima's instruction of the young Socrates would seem to render that motive problematic, thereby alerting us to the radical, and fundamentally erotic, tension which obtains between philosophy and the city. For inasmuch as his *eros* has as its true end the "immortality with good" which flows from intercourse with the divine, the philosophic lover's 'turn' to the human things and his practice of political philosophy has (once again) a purely instrumental or utilitarian character. The man driven by his *eros* to apprehend beauty/nobility in its fullness and perfection, and therein to give birth to immortalizing virtue, is engaged in a radically selfish pursuit, and to attain this selfish end he uses human beings and the human things (i.e., pursuits, laws, sciences), inferior representations of the being of the beautiful, solely as means to transcending the cave of political life and to generating his personal good. On Diotima's account, then, political philosophy is but a prolegomenon to first philosophy. The genuine lover of wisdom does indeed 'turn' to the political things, yet his motive in so doing remains fundamentally trans-political or sublime in character, insofar as he desires ultimately to travel beyond the horizon of the city to a "vast open sea of the beautiful" which makes human beauty appear ugly by comparison, and worthy only of disdain (211d-e).

When we submit the ascent described by the stranger to closer examination, this problematic dimension of political philosophy becomes still clearer. By proceeding through six

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[40](cont'd) wish to teach me anything, on the other hand the men in the towns do." (My translation).

stages of aesthetic perception and understanding, the lover of wisdom is exhorted to progress dialectically from a material understanding of the beautiful to an ever purer comprehension of the beauty inherent in form. The philosopher begins by loving one beautiful body, yet moves quickly to a love of all beautiful bodies as he recognizes the essential identity of all material instantiations of beauty. Next, in coming to understand that the beauty in souls is more honourable than that in the body, he turns to loving souls, in order that he might take the fourth step and behold the beauty inherent in human affairs and laws (or, "customs"; *nomoi*). Fifthly, he must lead his beloved on to the 'sciences' (*epistemas*;lit.:'knowledges'), so that he might himself see the beauty of knowledge itself, turning his reason to a vast expanse of unindividuated beauty and there giving birth to noble and magnificent (*megaloprepeis*) speeches and thoughts. And finally, he must discern in that Dionysian realm, that realm beyond individuation and particularity, a single science or knowledge which has as its object the *idea* of beauty itself, and he must generate through the divine beautiful that true virtue which elevates him to the status of a god (210a-211a). But notice a curious feature. After Diotima passes beyond the stage involving beauty in souls, "love" (*eros*) is purged from the account: the philosopher sees (*idein*) and beholds or contemplates (*theasthai*) the higher forms of human beauty, but he does not love them (210c-d).[41] The lover of wisdom neither loves nor stands in awe of the beauty/nobility inherent in the architecture of the city, or in the laws and customs which order human life: inasmuch as they are worthless and ugly in comparison with real beauty, he merely employs these human things as "steps for going up" (*epanabathmois*,211c), steps over which he must traverse in pursuit of his personal good. In his quest for wisdom the philosopher, we might say, walks all over the city.

Well might philosophy reap the greatest reproaches of public-spirited men (183a). In its selfishness and hubris, the *eros* peculiar to the philosopher emerges in this account as altogether devoid of civic attachment, and consequently as unjust and more than slightly treasonous. While previous speakers had praised Eros for his justice, and for his power to contribute directly to harmony and friendship in the political association (182a,185b,188d,196b-c,d), justice is conspicuously absent in Diotima's catalogue of *eros*' attributes--and with good reason, it seems (203d-e;cf.212b-c). For the erotic relationship between the philosopher and the city that is depicted in the stranger's *logos* appears decidedly non-reciprocal, even parasitic, in character. The lover of wisdom takes from the city, but he does not appear to give in return. He employs beautiful/noble human beings and regimes as means to his erotic fulfillment, and he therein acquires from the city a good which is instrumental to his achievement of the highest good, yet he does not appear to share with those whom he uses a concern for the welfare of the political community or a love of the common good, and consequently he would seem to be no friend to the city.[42] The philosophic *eros* drives a man into a pursuit which creates a great divide between his good and the good of the political association, a divide comparable in breadth to that which separates the respective goods of the divine and the mortal. Through his superhuman striving the philosopher longs to attain godhood, and the consequence of this erotic quest for the immortal union of mind with *kosmos* is a detachment from the mind of man and a lack of commitment to human justice: for the philosopher who follows Diotima's teaching, the evaluative criterion for judging political life is beauty/nobility rather than justice, and clearly these two need not coincide.[43] So in not loving the city, in not caring for the regime and the justice that it articulates and administers, the philosophic soul would seem to lack those qualities which are prized by good citizens; specifically, he would appear to lack that spirited love of one's own which can inspire men to the heights of self-sacrifice in defence of their community and its way of life (205e). Moreover, inasmuch as the philosopher is driven by his *eros* to have intercourse with the beautiful/noble youth of the city, there is a real possibility that he might in fact foster corruption and decadence through the selfish and hubristic example that he sets. Treating his personal good as paramount, and lacking any positive allegiance to civic justice or the common good, the philosopher appears to constitute a positive threat to the welfare of the *polis*, as he leads (*agagein*) his beautiful/noble beloveds beyond the political horizon, beyond the community of shared opinion which is the city, in order that he might himself behold the beauty inherent in reason and understanding (210c-d).

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[41] I was pleased to discover that Neumann also notices this peculiar (and quite radical) feature of the ascent.("Diotima's Concept of Love", p.44). However, he does not further consider its significance to the philosopher's relationship to the political community, but merely takes it as one more piece of evidence that *eros* is fundamentally poetic or creative rather than contemplative.

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[42] Consider Thrasymachus' indictment of Socrates in Book I of the *Republic*: "...unwilling to teach, he goes around learning from others, and does not even give thanks to them."(338a).

[43] For a particularly poetic statement of the potential conflict between these two human concerns, consider the words of the Chorus in Euripides' *Electra*, 1.1051: "Justice is in your words, but justice can be ugly". Indeed, that the administration of justice in political life sometimes requires the performance of (retributive) actions that demand a strong will and a stronger stomach, that just deeds need not always be beautiful/noble deeds, perhaps points out the necessity of courage or the discipline of the spirit as a political virtue. However, we should perhaps leave ourselves open to the suggestion that the carrying out of such shameful things, the performance of ugly actions required by justice, may itself be a highly noble endeavour, one which bespeaks a great striving to serve justice even (perhaps) at the cost of one's personal peace of soul.

In all fairness, though, we must recognize that Diotima does indeed offer a defence of philosophy against this charge of injustice and political subversion, arguing that the betterment of the youth constitutes a vital component of the philosopher's ascent to the *idea* of beauty (210c). That is, the portrait of philosophy in Socrates' recollection does account for an incidental good which accrues to the city as a consequence of the philosopher's selfish and hubristic pursuit of the good; namely, the promotion and elevation of civic virtue. In her erotic lessons, Diotima provides Socrates with a four-fold taxonomy of lovers, categorized under the general headings of bodily and psychic "pregnancy"; and we may discern in each of these erotic ways of life a symbiotic harmony of private and political goods, or a benefit which is conferred upon the city by the hubristic and self-centred *eros*. First, the greater part of men, who are "pregnant in their bodies", pursue personal immortality through the physical procreation of offspring who carry some genetic remembrance of the self into the future (208e). Through their erotic activity, then, such lovers of the body succeed in creating successive generations of human beings to populate the political community, and they thereby contribute to perpetuating the life of the city: physical *eros*, the desire for self-reproduction via sexual intercourse, harmonizes with political necessity, ensuring the continuance of the collective identity of the polity (cf.192b). Secondly, Diotima describes to Socrates those who are "pregnant" in their souls, the poets, legislators, and philosophers, and she suggests the public good which flows from their eroticism. In creating psychic 'offspring', beautiful accounts of heroes and their exploits, the *good* poets, the Hesiods and the Homers, achieve immortality through a lasting fame and remembrance in the minds of future readers and listeners (209d). Yet (as Phaedrus' speech testifies), these mythic and poetic portrayals serve a vital political function as well, inspiring courage and nobility in those men who are moved to imitate the characters and deeds of their ancient predecessors, and to sacrifice themselves in battle to defend the city (or its citizens) they love (179b-180b). Great legislators too, the Solons and Lycurguses who pursue immortal glory through the establishment of "new modes and orders" or novel political architectures, create something which is of lasting benefit to the political association (209d-e). To be remembered fondly, to achieve fame rather than infamy, the man who pursues immortality through political founding must strive to sire a wholesome, noble, and powerful regime; to create a moral foundation for a civilization which will inspire allegiance on the part of subsequent generations of citizens, and which will thereby endure long after he has succumbed to his personal mortality (182d).

Similarly with the philosopher, the fourth lover spoken of by Diotima, the erotic quest for immortality would appear to breed an incidental benefit for the community in which such striving for wisdom and virtue takes place. For in Diotima's account of the philosophic lover's intercourse with youthful beauties, philosophy emerges as a great humanizing influence upon the city. Much like the poets, the philosopher who is fluent in speeches about virtue -- the political philosopher who makes the virtue of men the theme of his *logos* -- engenders moderation and justice (*sophrosune te kai dikaiosune*) in those with whom he associates, or in those whom he employs as vessels for the discharge of his procreative power. In order that he might himself behold the beautiful/noble in human souls and the laws of the city, the lover of wisdom must first generate virtue in others, or give birth to excellence in the youth through his pedagogy. The non-philosophic men who fall prey to the philosopher's erotic net, who are captivated by the seemingly magical power of the philosopher's *eros* and who join his circle of seductive discourse, ultimately emerge from this erotic association, Diotima maintains, moderate and just, in possession of that greatest and most noble part of prudence which conduces to the good ordering of both cities and households, of both the public and private domains of civic life (209a-b). The philosopher would thus appear to number among the city's greatest benefactors: while neither moderate nor conventionally just himself, he nonetheless succeeds through his erotic and hubristic striving in imparting these virtues to those men with whom he has intercourse, and he thereby contributes to elevating the quality of rule in the city. Diotima's defence of political philosophy, her apology for a form of philosophy which uses the political for the sake of transcending the political, renders symbiotic that which first appeared as parasitic, and concludes with a demonstration that the highest political good and the highest human good are harmonious and mutually supportive. Hubris is no longer impious and potentially subversive, but rather it appears as a positively salutary virtue, and the hubristic philosopher as the greatest blessing to the city and its youth.

In light of this, it is difficult to comprehend just why Aristophanes might have wished to respond critically to Socrates' oration. In turning Socrates to the city, in persuading him to pursue political philosophy and to make speeches about virtue, Diotima would appear to have rescued philosophy from Aristophanes' critique in *The Clouds*, or to have reformed philosophy so as to neutralize the danger that its intrinsic hubris posed to the welfare of both the city and itself. The philosopher's comic nemesis should be pleased, even overjoyed ... Unless, that is, he has taken to heart Socrates' characterization of Diotima as a perfect sophist (208c), and has concluded that her apology for philosophy is in reality a *tour de force* of forensic chicanery, the epitome of making the weaker *logos* the stronger. If Aristophanes suspects that Socrates has concealed the truth about philosophy's relationship to the city behind a screen of deceptive rhetoric, or that he has employed clever speech to mask the real danger that the philosopher's hubristic *eros* poses to the political association, then he would indeed seem to have grounds for launching an attack upon the stranger's discourse.[44] But alas, with his plan to question the philosopher foiled by a sudden and unexpected interruption in the night's proceedings, Aristophanes loses his opportunity to call Socrates' bluff, and consequently we are barred from witnessing a renewal of the Aristophanic charge of Socratic hubris.

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[44] Indeed, as Alcibiades will later testify, Socrates is *always* ironic in his dealings with human beings, and he casts a screen of deception, a silenic cloak, around himself to conceal his true nature from public view (216d-e,221d-222a).

Or are we? Just as the poet leaned forward to say something, our narrator tells us, there was a loud knocking at the door, and moments later the forceful voice of Alcibiades could be heard in Agathon's courtyard (212c-d). That is, it is as if Aristophanes opened his mouth to speak, but the voice and person of Alcibiades leapt out instead, directly onto centre-stage of the *Symposium*. And indeed, in the 'eulogy' which this warlike and war-loving man proceeds to deliver in honour of the philosopher and his way of life, it is precisely Socrates' hubris which is the preeminent concern: with the arrival of Alcibiades, the conflict between justice and hubris, between politics and philosophy, becomes the overriding theme of the dialogue, as this former associate of Socrates puts his mentor on trial, compelling the symposiasts to sit in judgement of the philosopher's highminded arrogance and his hubristic treatment of many beautiful/noble youth in the city (219c). In the *Symposium*, we might say, what is hidden from us in speech is shown to us in deed -- Alcibiades appears to us in the dialogue as a concrete exemplification, a brilliant and striking personification, of the Aristophanic charge against Socrates and his hubristic *eros*.

Indeed, given the character of Diotima's apology for philosophy, her insistence that the hubristic philosophers justify their presence in the cities on the grounds of the civic virtue that they succeed in cultivating in the youth, it would seem absolutely crucial that Alcibiades follow in her train. Of all the things that one might say about this veritable monster of a man, of all the qualities that one might attribute to this rare human being who was simultaneously loved and feared by lesser men[45], moderation and justice would most certainly not number among them. Himself a portrait of the most extreme intemperance and hubris, possessed of a burning desire for conquest and imperium, Alcibiades (and similar men with whom Socrates had frequent intercourse, men like Charmides and Euthydemus, 222b) threatens to expose as clever sophistry Diotima's assertion of the symbiotic harmony of philosophic and political goods, and thereby to render philosophy once again a questionable and highly suspect enterprise. That men like Alcibiades could emerge from their association with Socrates with little evidence of moderation and justice in their souls casts serious doubt upon the power of a philosopher to foster these political virtues as he pursues his private good, his divine immortality. Alcibiades, and the type of nature that he represents, would appear to be the touchstone which reveals the inadequacy of the Diotimaic apology.

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[45] See Aristophanes, *The Frogs*, 1.1425.

Thus, with the intrusion of Alcibiades into the arrangement and proceedings of the banquet, Socrates' oration in the *Symposium* is shown to be highly 'erotic' in character: it is radically *incomplete* as a defence of philosophy or the trans-political *eros* of the good, and it cries out for that which would render it whole and self-sufficient. If it is to vindicate philosophy, if it is to defend the philosopher against the charge that his hubris is an enemy to the city's justice and the cause of great dangers to himself, then the dialogue must provide us with some other account of the political or public worth of philosophy; it must offer a defence of philosophy on grounds other than its power to generate the virtues of moderation and justice, or a defence which enables us to explain and justify what Socrates accomplished through his treatment of men like Alcibiades. As I hope to show, this other defence of philosophy, as well as an account of the limitations of the philosopher's civilizing effect upon the youth, may be apprehended through a careful examination of Alcibiades' speech and deeds in the *Symposium*, and it is to this new beginning of the dialogue that we will now turn.

3. Behold the Man:

The Entrance of Alcibiades

> "Don't you also share my supposition that the blame for the many's being harshly disposed toward philosophy is on those men from outside who don't belong, and have burst in like drunken revellers, abusing one another and indulging a love of quarreling, and who always make their arguments about persons, doing what is least fitting in philosophy."
>
> Plato, *Republic*, 500b.

As we saw in our examination of Socrates' eulogy to Eros, a proper understanding of the philosopher's effect upon noble youth in the city, whether it constitutes corruption or enhancement, would appear to be the fulcrum upon which any political defence of philosophy must rest. The youth of any city, especially the most talented and spirited youth, represent the regime's potential for immortality, or at least for inter-generational survival. Nurtured from birth into the authoritative opinions on the noble and the just which are embodied in the city's laws and customs, and urged by both family and community to respect the ancestral ways and to resist mindless innovation, the youth are a source of continuity between the past and the future of a city's way of life, arguably the most cherished possessions of any wholesome political association. Yet by nature spirited and rebellious, young men in the city are predisposed towards disobedience, hasty to seize any opportunity to contradict their elders, to protest against the old ways of their fathers and lawgivers, or to pursue innovative practices which depart from the customary past and which assert the 'distinctive' will and desires of the current generation. Thus, while they hold the future of the polity in their hands, representing in their opinions, tastes and aspirations the way of ~~life~~ which will be followed by subsequent generations of citizens, the youth are at the same time the most vulnerable point in the city, easily seduced by novelty, and instinctively drawn to pursuits which promise to nourish their spirits while exposing the contradictions in their forefather's understanding of the world.

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As the charges which prompted Socrates' trial and execution in Athens attest, philosophy was traditionally tainted with the suspicion that it serves this youthful penchant for rebellion from the ancestral; that it has a corrupting influence upon the youth, and therefore that it constitutes a mortal danger to the city, to the community of shared convictions on the good and the just which defines the political association. Dialectics, the art of contradiction which is the primary tool of philosophers, can supply to the youth a powerful instrument with which to undertake a subversive critique of the principles undergirding the city's laws and conventions: armed with the scalpel of dialectical argument, spirited young men are quick to vivisect and dishonour ancestral convictions, exposing the foolishness of their parents and rulers, and therewith appearing to supporters of the traditional order to have been transformed from law-abiding citizens into outlaws.[46] One need only recall the effect of Socratic education upon the young Pheidippides in *The Clouds* to appreciate the danger that philosophy and dialectics poses to the integrity of the family and civil society, and to comprehend (if not wholeheartedly endorse) the suspicion and hostility traditionally directed against philosophers by protective fathers and public-spirited men. When disseminated amongst the youth without regard to the suitability of nature and disposition, philosophy would seem to have the potential to poison the minds and erode the civic loyalty of erotic and spirited young souls, and thereby to undermine the stability and continuity of the political community. Those philosophers who fail to discriminate amongst the youth in their pedagogic endeavours, who fail to teach only those young men possessing orderly and stable natures and instead introduce the practice of philosophy and dialectical argument to all who approach them, threaten the very life-blood of the city, promoting a hubristic lawlessness and disobedience in that very group of citizens who are expected to extend the common life of the polity into the future.

It is thus the educational dimension of philosophy, that facet of the Socratic turn entailing direct contact between a philosopher and his polity, which is perhaps most responsible for philosophy's overtly political character, and which accordingly most constrains the activities of the lover of wisdom in political society. For to undertake to educate men within the confines of a political community is a decidedly political act, an activity which can exert a profound influence upon men's civic loyalty and their dedication to the common good. The end of a genuine educational effort is the formation of a whole human being who will either support the city's authoritative dictates or look down upon them; who will either maintain belief in the traditional views of his forefathers (in particular their views about the divine and its relationship to the human), or reject them in favour of more persuasive alternatives or a reasoned skepticism. The proximity of the philosopher as educator to erotic and ambitious juveniles, and his effect upon these vessels of unrealized potential (or, rather, public interpretations of that effect), thus play a large role in determining the civic reputation of the philosophic enterprise and the public honour accorded to its adherents: the character of the students that one creates, whether they emerge from their education as devoted citizens or insidious tyrants, inevitably reflects upon the character and practices of a teacher, bringing him either praise or blame. The Socratic philosopher, who cherishes above all the welfare of his own soul and of philosophy, and who displays a (albeit incidental) concern for the city as that arena of souls in which his pursuit of knowledge and his intercourse with beautiful youth necessarily proceeds, must be sensitive to this problematic question of philosophy's public reputation -- he must be 'political' in the most obvious sense of the term -- and he must exercise appropriate prudence and caution when undertaking to philosophize and teach in the *polis*. The pursuit of knowledge about the human soul, an activity which (as Diotima counselled Socrates) inevitably brings the philosophic lover into an educational association with the city's most able youth, does indeed pose a threat to the stability and continuity of the polity in which it takes place. Yet precisely for this reason it carries with it a threat to the reputation, and thus the safety, of philosophy and philosophers as well. Aristophanes would appear to have been most astute in his early diagnosis of the problem of Socrates, and in the sober warning he sounded to philosophic men: as the fate of Socrates, both in the comic drama and in real life, serves to remind all subsequent lovers of wisdom, the relationship of educators to the youth is a matter of immense political importance, and consequently those men whose sublime *eros* compels them to have intercourse with beautiful young souls must be prepared to defend themselves against the charge that they promote hubris and lawlessness in their pupils, or to justify to their accusers that their association with the youth is noble and good rather than base and harmful to the city.

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[46] See the philosopher's account of the 'changeling child' and the effects of dialectics upon the youth, *Republic*, 537d-539d.

It is this question concerning the philosopher's effect upon the youth, and its implications both for political life and the pursuit of knowledge, which becomes explicit in the *Symposium* upon Alcibiades' forceful intrusion and his subsequent eulogy of his mentor, Socrates. Conventional scholarship has long held that this seventh and final portion of the dialogue is intended to vindicate Socrates of the public charge that he corrupted the youth of Athens, showing (through the words of the very same man whose hubris and injustice were the cause of considerable suspicion and hostility being directed at the philosopher) that Socrates in reality attempted to control and moderate Alcibiades, and that he is therefore free of blame for how this young man and others like him turned out.[47] However, such an interpretation, while pleasing to the ears of those count themselves among the friends of Socrates, apparently relies upon a highly selective reading of Alcibiades' 'eulogy' of the philosopher, one which fails to notice or take seriously the speaker's own claim that he has mixed elements of both praise and blame in his image of this silenic creature. While Alcibiades does overtly confess his own psychic disharmonies or erotic divisions, and lays blame upon his great love of honour for leading him away from the philosopher's moderating influence and toward political affairs -- that is, while Alcibiades blames himself and the city for his corruption[48]-- a careful reading of his speech suggests that Socrates must indeed bear some responsibility for how Alcibiades emerged from this erotic liaison; or that the philosopher, through the nurture he supplied for Alcibiades' philerastic or timocratic nature, is at least in part to blame for this man's 'tyrannical' turn of soul. While the hasty reader sees in Alcibiades' speech an unproblematic praise of Socrates and his way of life, a more careful reading of the text requires one to take seriously its claim to be a powerful indictment of the philosopher's hubris and its effect upon high-spirited and talented youth.

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[47] See, for example, R.G. Bury, *Plato's Symposium* (1909): "The speech of Alcibiades...fulfills a serious purpose -- the purpose of vindicating the memory of Socrates from slanderous aspersions and setting in the right his relations with Alcibiades."(p.lii).

[48] Cf. *Republic*, 491d-495b.

The question of philosophy's effect upon the most noble or beautiful youth in the city is thus rendered problematic by the *Symposium*, as ultimately we are led by Plato to see some justice in Aristophanes' critique of philosophic hubris, and to conclude that the philosopher, in his selfish pursuit of beauty and the good, may well have a corrupting influence upon the young men with whom he associates. In order to begin to see this question and the context in which it arises, we must turn to consider the final portion of the *Symposium*, the confrontation between the beautiful and strong Alcibiades and the enigmatic and hubristic Socrates. And here we must begin with Alcibiades' nocturnal irruption into this private gathering; a scene which is short, yet extremely dense, and therefore deserving of detailed examination.

3.1 Alcibiades: Tyrant or Nobleman

Alcibiades' unanticipated arrival at Agathon's victory dinner is the fourth major interruption in the night's proceedings (cf.174e,175c,185c-e), and it comes just as the contest in speeches should have approached its end. Barging in with his personal entourage of revellers, this uninvited guest disturbs the peaceful sobriety of the eulogistic competition, and by his presence signals the return of drunkenness, music, and immoderation. Professing his intoxication and lack of self-control, Alcibiades upsets the order which had governed the symposiasts' speeches, and, claiming fear of Socrates and his forcefulness, substitutes the philosopher for the god Eros as the object of his praise and worship. With the arrival of Alcibiades, then, the banquet undergoes a fundamental revolution in its form, as a man of great beauty and charm, a man possessed by a most forceful demon, promptly dismantles the pre-existing arrangment so as to allow for his own creative self-expression, and delivers a 'eulogy' which is at once a praise and indictment of the philosopher's effect upon men around him.

Yet Alcibiades' usurpation of authority at the victory banquet is more than social boorishness, for it carries with it a profound political teaching about the fragility and limitations of democracy. For the arrangement or regime which is subverted by this Herculean soul represents, one may say, a democracy in microcosm. Hence, in portraying this man's revolutionary arrival at Agathon's home the dialogue dramatically suggests that such a political order, despite the appeal of the justness of its principles, remains inherently flawed at its foundations, proving incapable of containing or satisfying the longings of certain exceptionally erotic souls (cf.194d).

This democratic order was peacefully, if only playfully, instituted early in the evening, having its origins in the resolutions which articulated the tenor and structure of the drinking party. Following Socrates' delayed arrival to dinner (he had halted along the way to turn his mind upon himself), Pausanius, we are told, implored those present to consider *collectively* how they might arrange their drinking so as to avoid the harsh effects of drunkenness, as many of the men present had indulged too heavily in the grape on the preceding day. As Eryximachus makes explicit in supporting this motion, there is to be no autocratic imposition of will on this question, as each man's opinion must be heard, and especially that of their host (176b). Assuming the office of *archon* or counsellor for this assembly of symposiasts, Eryximachus classifies those present in terms of their capacity to withstand drunkenness, and he therewith describes a hierarchy of natural power or endurance: himself, Phaedrus, and Aristodemus are weak, having little capacity for drink; Aristophanes, Pausanius and Agathon are, by comparison, strong and heavy drinkers; and the enigmatic Socrates manifests a near superhuman tolerance and self-control, being so impervious to the effects of wine that the technician cannot provide an account for him, but sets him off alone (176c;cf.214a,220a). Judging from the apparent consensus that no one is eager to drink heavily, and proclaiming his medical opinion that drunkenness is hard on human beings and to be avoided, the doctor advises those present to drink moderately. Phaedrus, obedient to his beloved in all things but especially in medicine or matters of the body, exhorts the banqueteers to follow this good counsel, and thus all agree unanimously to allow each man the freedom to drink as he pleases and not to turn the party into a drinking contest (perhaps with full recognition that in the latter case, the philosopher would put them all to shame).

With this first constitutional resolution, arrived at through the universal and free expression of opinion by gentlemen, individual freedom is entrenched as the foundational principle of this democratic symposium or drinking-together. This community of drinkers has a purely voluntary basis: each member will remain free from the compulsion and domination of others, and will be permitted to partake of its end or purpose (i.e.,drinking) in proportion to his capacities and desires. However, it must be noted that through this institution of personal freedom in regard to drinking, a form of artificial equality is ushered in through the back door, so to speak, as that very hierarchy of natural powers described by Eryximachus is obscured by the elimination of competitive drinking. In agreeing that each shall be permitted license to pursue his own pleasure through drink, and in refusing to entrench some minimum standard of achievement in the founding compact, those symposiasts who possess the least bodily endurance are spared a painful demonstration of their weakness, while the strongest (most notably the philosopher) are denied that agonistic environment in which their natural powers would flourish and come to dominate.[49] In its origin, then, this democratic polity in miniature involves a departure from and masking of nature's order, as competitive struggle and inequality are replaced by peaceful sobriety and the levelling of natural differences.

Following this first popular decree, Eryximachus continues in his role as symposiarch, proposing that they "dismiss the flutegirl who just came in, and let her flute for herself, or, if she wants, for the women within, while we consort (*suneinai*; lit:"be with") with each other today through speeches"(176e). As with the initial proposal, the symposiasts register their unanimous assent to this second constitutional article, and urge the technician to lead them still further by proposing what sort of speeches they should deliver. Taken together, then, these two resolutions concerning drink and music suppress and moderate the influence of Dionysus, god of wine and the flute, and enforce a climate of Apollinian sobriety and temperance.[50] The charms of wine, music, and (what is left unemphasized, but remains a dominant erotic concern for men) *women* are replaced by the charms of poetic speech, with the suggestion that a community in *logos* maintains a highly erotic or procreative character, allowing men to give birth to fair or beautiful thoughts and speeches (177d:*logon* ...*kalliston*).

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[49] Cf. *Republic*,358e-359b; *Gorgias*,491e-492c. Of course, it is a democracy of the *elite* which is established at the home of Agathon: the men present are not in actuality members of the popular class, but men who are accomplished in various endeavours (i.e.,medecine, rhetoric, poetry, philosophy). However, that even this "best case scenario" for democracy (i.e., egalitarian justice among men who are roughly equal in talents and capacities) proves incapable of accommodating Alcibiades would seem to strengthen the point that men of his nature simply do not 'fit' in the democratic environment.

Finally, to complete the democratic arrangement, Eryximachus proposes to the assembly the manner in which they should spend their time in common. In lamenting the poets' neglect of the great and important Eros, the doctor remarks (erroneously, as it turns out[51]) that no one has ever rendered a hymn or eulogy to this wondrous god. To rectify this manifest injustice to the divine, and (of course) to gratify Phaedrus, Eryximachus proposes to these men that they turn their attention to *erotika*, and calls upon them to invoke their powers of epedeictic rhetoric to praise Eros, embellishing and adorning (*kosmesai*) the god in speech.

It is Socrates himself who takes the lead in seconding this third motion, apparently hungry for a contest in speeches to replace the one in drink that had earlier been banished. The language employed here by the philosopher is revealing of the political character of the banquet, and points to the problems which attend democratic justice. For no one, Socrates observes, will cast a vote (*psephieitai*) against this proposal for a rhetorical contest in honour of Eros. In fact, the philosopher openly avows himself an expert in knowledge of *erotika*, and further observes that both Agathon and Pausanius are powerful orators, whereas Aristophanes the comedian is well poised for praising *eros* since his whole way of life is devoted to serving Dionysus and Aphrodite (177e). Nevertheless, the philosopher professes to have certain reservations about the harmony or integrity of this arrangement, complaining that, in practice, it would seem to violate one of its fundamental principles -- equality. The contest is not quite fair or equal (*isou*) for those men situated at the foot of the table, Socrates protests: whereas those who happen to come early in the speaking order will presumably benefit from their comparative sobriety and alertness and will have innumerable terms of praise to choose from, those who come later in the program will have to contend with the effects of the wine they have ingested, and will have to work much harder in framing innovative as well as fair eulogies to the god (cf.214d). Yet, while this regime would thus seem to tend naturally towards violating a principal tenet of its justice, such an inherent flaw or contradiction does not appear to trouble the philosopher greatly, for he will be content if the arrangement results in "fine" (or "noble", or "beautiful";*kalos*) speeches being delivered. Consistent with Diotima's account of the philosophic lover's turn to the political affairs of men (210b-c), justice would not appear to be the philosopher's principal concern in evaluating the goodness of this regime, but rather it is the generation of beauty or nobility which is the touchstone by which the excellence of this, if not any, polity will be judged.

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[50] On the rich psychological and metaphysical implications of the Apollinian and Dionysian elements in man and nature (which play such a large role in the *Symposium*), consider Nietzsche's discussion in *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, section 1 and throughout. Among the attributes of the Apollinian, Nietzsche includes dreams, illusion, images, divination, measured restraint, freedom from wilder emotions, beauty, mere appearance, and the *principium individuationis*. By contrast, the wild and bacchic Dionysian represents intoxication, music, dance, narcotic frenzy, ecstacy, sensuality and cruelty, violence, enchantment, and penetration to the primordial unity of nature. Perhaps most important for our present analysis, however, is Nietzsche's contention, first, that the force of Dionysus is the basic stratum of nature and may be suppressed but not eradicated by Apollinian sobriety, and secondly, that the tension between these opposing tendencies in man expresses itself creatively in the tragic aesthetic.

[51] See the choral ode to the all-powerful Eros in Sophocles' *Antigone*,ll.879-94.

The emergence of the noble or beautiful, we may judge from Socrates' declaration, has a profound effect upon those who find themselves in its presence, leaving them contented or satisfied with the (perhaps unjust and trying) circumstances they are forced to endure in life. The coming-into-being of beauty/nobility has the power to satisfy, and even to inspire and beautify, the souls of those who witness it[52]; indeed, it may well be, as Diotima once suggested to Socrates, that it is only the apprehension of the beautiful/noble in its purity that makes life worth living for a human being, being itself the greatest consolation in a life fraught with injustice and ugliness (211d). However, as a measure of how difficult and rare is the genesis of genuine beauty or nobility in politics (or perhaps only in democratic politics), the philosopher closes his statement by wishing good fortune (*tuche agathe*) to Phaedrus, the father of the argument and the first to eulogize Eros. Thus, the philosopher subtly reminds us that despite the noble efforts and intentions that a man may bring to bear on his circumstances, the emergence of beauty/nobility remains precariously dependent upon luck or fortune, which may be limited but not altogether neutralized by human prudence (cf.184e with 217a). By virtue of the considerable role played by fortune in human affairs, the generation of nobility cannot be made the object of a rational art or *techne*, but must rely upon good luck or divine assistance.

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[52] See *Republic*,401b-d. The city-in-speech, created in order to locate and understand justice in the individual, would nevertheless appear to have fineness, beauty or nobility as its goal. Indeed, the name eventually attached to this city-- Kallipolis; lit:"Beautiful City" --emphasizes this political end.

Hence, we see that prior to the entrance of Alcibiades, the matrix of rules governing the context and conditions in which these eulogies to Eros are delivered was, from its inception, inherently democratic in character. Yet once he storms through the carefully guarded gates of this city with his army of drunken attendants, the unconquerable Alcibiades makes it clear that he will neither recognize nor tolerate the popular resolutions decreed by the banqueteers, and he proceeds singlehandedly to overturn each article of their founding compact.

When the loud disturbance in the courtyard preempted Aristophanes' response to the philosopher, Agathon quickly dispatched his servants to see who was approaching, instructing them to grant entry if it happened to be close friends, but if not to send them away by telling them that the drinking had already come to an end: only intimate associates are to be permitted access to this being-together, and strangers are to be repelled by means of deception and falsehood. Not long after, the symposiasts could hear the distinctive voice of Alcibiades, shouting loudly and evidently intoxicated, calling for Agathon and commanding that he be led before Agathon. Presumably this man did not number among those close associates of Agathon who should be invited in, but he obviously had little patience with his rival's polite fiction. The first words of this strong man, both their substance and their drunken mode of expression, are quite revealing of his nature and disposition.[53] For it is a searching voice, a longing voice, that is heard by the men inside; a voice expressing a powerful desire to locate and to be in the presence of the good (*to agathon*). As Diotima had once taught Socrates, *eros* is fundamentally a love of the good, an instinctual longing in the soul of the lover to acquire happiness through the acquisition of the good things. Alcibiades, then, is a man in search of fulfillment, longing to be made whole and to be in possession of that which would make life worth living: as he will later confess, his very association with Socrates was motivated by this intense yearning for the good, by a desire to acquire that which would gratify his *eros* (218d). Much like Glaucon in the *Republic*, but even more so than Glaucon, Alcibiades' soul is dominated by a most powerful *eros* which drives him to find the best route to the good life, and which compels him to disregard every boundary of both the public and private domains in his quest for personal fulfillment. Overflowing with great and proud thoughts, and awesome in the strength of both his body and his soul, Alcibiades would appear to embody qualities that Aristophanes had earlier attributed to our earliest ancestors, the hubristic circle-men (190b-c).

In addition to portraying this high or noble side of his character, however, the manner of Alcibiades' arrival hints at a dark and dangerous side of his soul, and raises an ugly dimension of human *eros* that had been either ignored or disparaged on this night devoted to eulogizing a god. For Alcibiades appears at this symposium boisterously drunk, an advocate of universal drunkenness, and it would seem that we are meant to interpret this intoxicated state as somehow connected with his eroticism. Indeed, in the *Republic*, while describing the emergence of the tyrannical soul, Socrates wonders whether a drunken man doesn't experience a tyrannic turn of mind, and remarks to Adeimantus that "a man becomes tyrannic in the precise sense when, by nature or by his practice or both, he has become drunken, erotic and melancholic".[54] And earlier on this very evening, both Pausanius and Eryximachus had bifurcated *eros* into its noble Uranian and shameful Pandemian expressions, blaming the latter as the cause of lawless desire, hubris, injustice, destructiveness, and chaos (181b-c;188a-b). *Eros*, that noble longing of the *psyche* to cleave to the beautiful and to achieve a union with eternal beings, that procreative impulse of the soul which in a sublimated form serves as the very germ of philosophy and the pursuit of knowledge about the beings, nonetheless retains a connection with violence and tyrannical madness, and is potentially the cause of the most heinous acts of injustice and violation of sacred limits. When reflected upon, our natural awareness of *eros* -- which consists first of all in our awareness of our sexual passions -- suggests to us that the impulse to love and the impulse to war are not divergent forces. In reality, these apparent opposites issue from a common seat of passion, and hence the soul's capacity for creative or poetic expression shares an intimate kinship with its potential for destruction and violence. *Eros* consequently appears Janus-faced, with one visage gazing up toward the kingly path of knowledge and virtue, while its alter ego, enslaving the soul to its base passions and appetites, glares down along the tyrannical path to ignorance and bestial decadence.

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[53] Note also that Alcibiades' first words in the dialogue, spoken not in person but by means of a disembodied voice, are strangely reminiscent of Diotima's description of the immaterial *idea* of beauty/nobility (211e), as is the term used here by our narrator to describe this man's "sudden" arrival (*exaiphnes*;cf.210e,223b).

[54] *Republic*, 573b-c.

By contrast with the *Republic*, which virtually opens with a curse upon *eros* and its tyrannical enslavement of the soul[55], the *Symposium* overtly praises the noble dimension of man's erotic longings, emphasizing that *eros* is the human impulse to education and psychic liberation, while offering only the slightest hints at the dark depths to which it can drag a man (cf.199d). With the arrival of the drunken warrior, however, whose soul is a veritable theatre of battle between his kingly and tyrannical longings, the dialogue bids us to confront the dark mysteries of *eros*, and to explore their implications for both philosophy and political life. Moreover, as Socrates himself remarks in describing the forceful nature of Alcibiades, this dark face of *eros*, the origin of such ugly and disfiguring passions as jealousy and envy, is wondrous or amazing (*thaumasta*;213e), and hence as fascinating a subject for philosophic investigation as its noble visage, although one which is perhaps more demanding of courage.

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[55] See Cephalus' report of the response once offered by Sophocles to a query concerning his sexual potency in old age:"Most joyfully did I escape it, as though I had run away from a sort of frenzied and savage master".*Republic*,329b-c.

and strength of soul on behalf of the investigator.

Alcibiades' sudden appearance in Agathon's doorway has all the grandeur of a tragic epiphany: intoxicated, thickly crowned with ivy, violets, and fillets, and accompanied by a flutegirl and several attendants, Alcibiades intrudes upon this private gathering as the very image of Dionysus emerging from the sea.[56] In his greeting to the symposiasts, delivered with a tone of congeniality which doesn't entirely mask his forcefulness and his potential for violent action, Alcibiades announces his motives for barging in uninvited, and belatedly requests permission to join a party that he has already joined (not to say appropriated):

> "Men, hail! Will you welcome (or,"pledge friendship with";*dexesthe*) a very forcefully drunk man as a fellow drinker, or shall we go away just as soon as we have wreathed Agathon, for which single purpose we have come? For I, you see", he said,"could not come yesterday, but now I have come with fillets on my head, so that from my own head I might wreathe the head of the wisest and most beautiful/noble. Will you laugh scornfully at me because I am drunk? But all the same, even if you do laugh I know well that I am telling the truth. But tell me at once. Shall I enter on the said conditions or not? Will you join me in drink or not?"(212e-213a)

Alcibiades' first question, expressing his desire to enter into a community or common association with these symposiasts, is ironic, insofar as his thoroughly intoxicated state (to which he repeatedly draws attention) actually negates this very possibility. As we noted in examining the founding of this democratic order, the institution of moderate drinking served to nullify a natural hierarchy of power, and achieved an (albeit artificial) equality that was instrumental in forging this community or being-together at the home of Agathon. If true friendship or community requires a rough equality of capacity and a harmony of goods, then the sober and moderate, men who are concerned to preserve intact a regime founded upon sobriety and moderation, cannot pledge friendship with or welcome among them those men who display drunkenness and immoderation, much less those who advocate this condition for others. Alcibiades' condition violates the founding principles of the community into which he seeks entry, and his presence thus poses a threat to its survival as a moderate democratic order.

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[56] At this point the dialogue presents us with a curious mystery: is the flutegirl who enters here with Alcibiades the same one who was banished from the symposium at 176e? If so, then we must conclude, first, that her *eros* craved more than the company of the women within, and secondly, that Alcibiades' may have heard a report about the activities at Agathon's home (particularly about the presence of a beautified Socrates), and hence that his arrival at the party is not accidental.

Taken from its microcosmic image to the level of the political association, then, Alcibiades' question concerning drunkenness and friendship points to a perennial problem for democracy: What to do with such highly erotic, ambitious, and proud men; men who do not rest content with the equality presumed and required by a democratic order, who consider such equality false and a standing offence to their superior talents and merits, and who are compelled to gratify their longing to be pre-eminent and to rule over others in the city. It is in the nature of democracy to suppress such claims to superiority, whether they make their appeal to natural talents or conventional status, and to deny in particular the existence of any pre-political right of some to rule over others. Indeed, this egalitarian prejudice would appear to constitute the core of democracy's popular appeal, inasmuch as it ensures that the majority of men who are lacking in physical strength and wealth will nonetheless have an equal share in the task of ruling the city, thereby remaining free from the autocratic dictates of the few strong or wealthy men among them. Yet proud and spirited men -- men such as Alcibiades, Glaucon, Charmides and Critias -- who thrive on competition and desire to be first in everything, who are confident of their superiority and are ready and willing to prove it, place little credence in the universal equality deemed legitimate in democratic politics, and (like Alcibiades, who ended up fighting on three different sides in the Peloponnesian war) find it difficult to feel any positive allegiance to democratic justice and its levelling tendencies. Their spiritedness, their love of glory and power and their proud opinion that they are deserving of acknowledged supremacy among men, fuels their indignation in the face of legislated equality. Such men are by nature subversive enemies of democracy, a regime which ignores their claims to political superiority, and which (short of imperial expansion, which only alleviates the problem temporarily) proves incapable of satisfying their longings for personal fame and self-expression.

Tocqueville, a thinker who demonstrates an acute sensitivity to the problem of ambition in democratic politics, succinctly describes the manner in which democratic principles and procedures stifle proud aspirations, and points to the potentially dangerous effects of democratic equality upon spirited and ambitious men:

> "[I]n proportion as men become more alike and the principle of equality is more peacably and deeply infused into the institutions and manners of the country, the rules for advancement become more inflexible, advancement itself slower, the difficulty of arriving quickly at a certain height far greater. From hatred of privelege and from embarassment of choosing, all men are at last forced, whatever may be their standard, to pass the same ordeal; all are indiscriminately subjected to a multitude of petty preliminary exercises, in which their youth is wasted and their imagination quenched, so that they despair of ever fully attaining what is held out to them; and when at length they are in a condition to perform any extraordinary acts, the taste for such things has forsaken them."[57]

In these conditions, Tocqueville warns, the genuinely spirited and ambitious man may well refuse to comply with such procedural drudgery and the rule of law, and will rebel against the democratic order which denies immediate gratification for his aspirations to greatness. Should such an ambitious man acquire power, he will become immoderate and daring in its exercise; should he lose it, he will contemplate the overthrow of the regime to regain it. The condition of equality in democracy, an offence to hyper-spirited men, Tocqueville concludes, "gives to great political ambition a character of revolutionary violence, which it seldom exhibits to an equal degree in aristocratic communities".[58]

By all accounts, Alcibiades was one of these grandly ambitious souls who pose such an intractable problem for democracies: he was a man dominated by a passion for glory, and a man who earned early in his lifetime a reputation for intemperance, hubris, violence, and contempt for the democratic order.[59] Indeed, as he admits in the *Symposium*, even at a young age he considered himself capable of handling the political affairs of his native Athens (216a) -- a proud and youthful desire to rule which the philosopher attempted to tame (although not, notice, eradicate). Standing in Agathon's doorway in a posture of commanding eminence, while nonetheless requesting permission to join this democratic gathering, Alcibiades thus places these symposiasts in a most awkward political dilemma. For given his intoxicated state, as well as the legion of drunken revellers attending him, these men (who, with one, or possibly two exceptions, appear lacking in warlike spirit) cannot with impunity refuse Alcibiades entry. Yet if they do acquiesce in his grandeur and grant him entry, they must do so with the suspicion that he will not submit to their democratic order and procedures, or with the recognition that his presence will result in a fundamental revolution in their arrangement.[60] Thus, while Alcibiades asks whether he should "enter on the said conditions or not", it would appear that it is other conditions which remain unspoken (i.e., those which find expression in his visible splendor and drunkenness) which prove most decisive: if he enters, he will not be ruled by others, but will usurp power and establish his own regime (cf.213e). The political dilemma occasioned by this man's appearance at the symposium, and the only possible resolution to this dilemma, is perhaps nowhere better captured than in the response given by Aeschylus to Dionysus in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, upon being asked what the Athenian democracy should do with Alcibiades: "On the one hand, it is best not to rear a lion in the city;/ On the other hand, having reared him, comply with his ways".[61]

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[57] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Trans. Henry Reeve, Vintage Books, New York, 1945) Vol.2, p.259.
[58] Ibid, p.260.
[59] Consider Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I,ii,12-13.

Yet Alcibiades' opening address does contain certain spoken conditions; ones which proclaim his goal or purpose in usurping power at this drinking party, and which perhaps hint at this mature warrior's high political aspirations: he has come, he tells these men, to pay personal tribute to the wisest and most beautiful/noble. Given his notorious vanity (219c), it is likely that those present would be skeptical of Alcibiades' professed desire to recognize and confer distinction upon a beauty greater than his own. Yet, perhaps anticipating such disbelief in his proclamation, and further revealing how deeply affected he was by that occasion when Socrates "laughed scornfully" at him (*katagelase*;219c), Alcibiades wonders aloud whether they will dare to mock him in laughter (*katagelasthe*), thereby implicitly warning them against treating him in such a disrespectful and hubristic fashion. Nevertheless, in a claim which demonstrates how far he has progressed from his youthful preoccupation with attaining popular glory or the honour of the many (cf.216b,218d), Alcibiades professes that no amount of ridicule will deter him from saying such things, as he knows well that he is speaking truthfully about his motives. As a result either of his present intoxication or his prior educational association with the philosopher, or both, this spirited man has attained a condition of independence or self-sufficiency which serves to liberate him from the influence of the *demos*, leaving him unconcerned with catering to the taste of the multitude and unresponsive to its praise and blame. Hence, while Alcibiades' usurpation of rule at this party is blatantly undemocratic, making him appear tyrannical from the perspective of egalitarian justice, it nevertheless bespeaks a noble independence and strength on the part of the usurper, as does his declared intention in undertaking this autocratic revolution; namely, to honour wisdom and beauty/nobility. Such lofty motives in political life, when proclaimed in principle and faithfully pursued in practice, are not to be despised, regardless of the man from whom they emanate.

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[60] Indeed, with the closing words of his greeting --"Tell me at once"-- Alcibiades gives imperative expression to his will, and pre-empts the deliberative speech with which the symposiasts had originally founded the democratic assembly.

[61] Aristophanes, *Frogs*, ll.1431-2. (My translation).

Captivated by his great beauty and seduced by his charm, the symposiasts welcome this usurper among them with a thundrous ovation (the same reaction which had greeted Agathon's sensuous eulogy; 198a), thereby surrendering their power of self-rule (i.e.,"...having reared him, comply with his ways."). Led by his personal entourage, Alcibiades enters through the gates of this little polity, and approaches Agathon in order to make good his promise to wreathe the head of the wisest and most beautiful in the room. Yet, we are told, "as he was taking off the fillets to do the crowning -- he had them before his eyes and so did not see (*ou katidein*) Socrates -- he sat down alongside Agathon, between him and Socrates; for Socrates had made room for Alcibiades when he saw (*katidein*) him." (213a-b).

This seemingly innocuous dramatic detail -- Socrates' having made room for Alcibiades -- is in fact quite significant for a proper understanding of the association between these two men, insofar as it casts doubt upon the philosopher's subsequent profession of fear before Alcibiades (213d), and suggests subtle manipulation on the part of Socrates to ensure that he would remain close to this beautiful man. The ambitious Alcibiades, who longs that the good be his, appeared to be blinded by his fillets, by the tokens of honour and victory granted to a hero by a popular audience, and was thereby rendered incapable of perceiving or beholding the philosopher.[62] Yet the philosopher, whose view was clear and unimpeded, could behold this man in all of his splendid beauty and potential, and contrived it so that he might be in his presence. As Alcibiades will momentarily exclaim upon recognizing who occupies the third seat on his couch, Socrates has the habit of appearing suddenly wherever one least expects to see him, like a skilled hunter lying in ambush to leap upon an unsuspecting prey (213c;cf.203d).[63] Socrates, Alcibiades remarks, has not chosen to sit with Aristophanes or anyone else who is or wishes to be laughable, but has contrived it (*diemechano*) so that he might sit beside the most beautiful/noble man in the room -- an apparent reference to the philosopher's original place beside Agathon, but a statement which is equally true about his proximity to Alcibiades himself.[64] While he will emerge in Alcibiades' eulogy as an ironic lover, as a beloved and a pursued who only *appears* to love and pursue (216d-e;222b), we see here that in reality Socrates is the true eroticist, longing to be close to his beautiful beloved: in strict accordance with Diotima's teaching on *eros* and the ascent to the beautiful itself, the philosopher acts like the perfect pederast and the very incarnation of Eros, skillfully weaving devices (*mechanas*) that will trap beautiful/noble souls in his seductive net (cf.203d-e).

Responding to this allegation of deceitfulness, Socrates (in an especially ironic, comedic request) implores the soft and effeminate Agathon to defend him against the hard and manly Alcibiades, complaining that in loving this beautiful and forceful man he got more than he bargained for. The love he has for Alcibiades has proven quite troublesome, he laments, as his beloved has turned out to be a madly jealous human being. Reminding us of the dark face of *eros* and its power to enslave and disfigure the soul of a lover, the philosopher observes that Alcibiades' passion is forceful and destructive, causing him to be envious of the other beauties that Socrates has intercourse with and to abuse the philosopher out of this jealousy. Apparently well acquainted with the selfish disposition of this volatile warrior, Socrates calls upon Agathon to act as peacemaker and to reconcile him with Alcibiades; or, failing that, to shield him from violent assault. Before Alcibiades, the philosopher maintains, he quakes with fear of his madness and his "love of lovers" (*philerastian*).

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[62] However, if Alcibiades has in fact been apprised of Socrates presence at this banquet (see above,n.56), then we have reason to suspect that he has in reality spotted the philosopher by this time, and that his oversight is feigned. All of this would seem to suggest that Alcibiades' real purpose in attending this party is to honour and be with Socrates, and hence that his crowning of Agathon is merely an act of "foreplay", flirting with another in order to tease his beloved.

[63] See also *Alcibiades I*,104d.

[64] See 175c: In fact, it was Agathon who determined that Socrates would occupy the seat beside him, not vice versa.

This description of Alcibiades as a "philerast" or a lover of lovers is the second and final usage of this term in the *Symposium*, and undoubtedly it is meant to be quite revealing of his nature in light of its initial mention in the myth of Aristophanes. In the comic poet's four-fold taxonomy of lovers, the fourth and final classification consists of those men who are cutlets of the ancient male nature, or whose ancestors belonged to the male race of circle-men before they were punished by Zeus with bisection. Being slices of the male nature, these lovers are homosexual, pursuing as their complementary half those who are like to themselves, and having intercourse with females and generating offspring only when compelled to do so by law and political necessity: the *eros* of these ancient males does not readily accomodate itself to the demands of civilized life, but must be restrained by law and convention (*nomos*) if the city is to survive and reproduce itself. Contrary to popular opinions, the comedian maintains, the homosexuality of these lovers is not a manifestation of effeminacy, but rather derives from their superior masculinity, and reflects their longing to be forever in the presence of those who similarly represent tokens of ancient manliness.[45] It is these manly lovers, he concludes, who are the supremely political types, being drawn to the affairs of the city when mature, and becoming consummate pederasts and philerasts, lovers of boys and lovers of lovers.

Crucial to the poet's account of philerasty, then, is the love of honour and the love of power which reside in the souls of such high-spirited and erotic men. As his political ambition suggests, the philerast, the man who loves lovers, is one who craves for the honour or admiration extended to him by those who are attracted to his beauty, and one who takes immense satsifaction in knowing that his beauty has the power to enslave the passions of his lovers. The philerast disdains the affection of women, valuing only the love and esteem of other males. Consequently he is driven by his *eros* into the male domain of politics, where he longs to be pre-eminent among men, to rule their souls and to be the primary object of their awe and fascination. Alcibiades, Socrates maintains, is endowed with such a philerastic nature, manifesting the love of honour and the love of power in the extreme: since the philosopher first loved Alcibiades as a youth, we learn, he has been unable to speak with another beautiful human being without inciting this man's envy and jealousy. Unwilling to tolerate competitors for the philosopher's affection, Alcibiades longs to monopolize Socrates' *eros*; to monopolize the honour of his love, and to monopolize power over his love, thereby assimilating his lover's power to his own (cf.222d). Thus at the root of Alcibiades' aggressive disposition resides his philerasty; his profound longing to dominate the passions of those who are captivated by his remarkable beauty, or his compulsion to emerge victorious over all rivals in every competition for honour and power.

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[45] It must be noted that Aristophanes' myth only accounts for the naturalness of homosexuality if one is prepared to believe in it in its literal form. If, however, man is by nature political and has no lineage to an ancient race of barbarous circle-men, if human nature finds its fulfillment within a political setting, then one must conclude that the sexual reproduction necessary to sustain that political setting is natural, and consequently that homosexuality runs contrary to human nature and political necessity.

In response to the philosopher's call for a truce, however, the mad philerast (presumably recalling the hubristic rebuke he suffered at the hands of Socrates and the deep torment it caused him) emphatically asserts that no reconcilation is possible between them, but he promises to take vengeance on Socrates at some later time (213e). Yet in the same breath as he threatens to enact revenge upon the philosopher, Alcibiades, wishing to avoid the reproach of Socrates (and thereby revealing the extent to which he still values the philosopher's love and esteem), retrieves some of the fillets he had given to the poet in order that he might wreathe the head of the philosopher. Foreshadowing what will become a prominent theme in his praise of Socrates, the immoderate usurper here honours the philosopher for the extraordinary power of his *logos*, remarking to Agathon that Socrates "conquers all human beings in speeches, and not just the day before yesterday as you did but at all times"(213e;215c-e). Earlier in the evening, when Socrates had arrived in the middle of dinner and insulted his host with subtle irony, Agathon had prophesied that "...a little later, you and I will go to court about our wisdom, with Dionysus as judge."(175e). With his crowning of Socrates, Alcibiades, who enters this symposium as the very incarnation of the drunken Dionysus, fulfills this prophesy in a manner which is unfavourable to Agathon, initially awarding the title of wisest and most beautiful to the poet, only to reconsider and insist that he defer to the superior wisdom and beauty of the philosopher.

Having paid his tribute to wisdom and beauty, Alcibiades turns his attention once again to the business of politics, taking action to solidify his revolutionary seizure of power. Deploring the Apollinian sobriety of the party, the bacchic usurper forcefully proclaims that all present must drink, since they have agreed to do so; and, in a mockery of democratic procedure, he chooses himself as symposiarch or leader of the drinking. Yet, a quick glance at the verbal exchanges since Alcibiades' entrance reveals that this claim of a consensual authorization for drunkenness is untrue: there was neither vote nor deliberation on the issue; rather, this significant departure from the terms of the founding compact is wholly the product of Alcibiades' autocratic will. Considered more closely, however, the usurper's claim emerges more as ironic than simply false, aptly characterizing how the sovereignty of this sober arrangement was relinquished, and exemplifying the manner by which a tyrant customarily comes to power in a democracy. For Alcibiades, despite his warlike temperament and his capacity for violence, does not compel these men through force to submit to his will. Rather, the symposiasts are seduced into compliance by this man's splendid beauty and charming wit, by his visible grandeur and his playful manner of speaking. Alcibiades flatters these men upon his entrance, suggesting that he will comply with whatever the majority decides about his presence at this party: he appears polite and deferential, claiming that he will depart once he has wreathed Agathon should these men wish to maintain the privacy and sobriety of their gathering. In his drunken condition -- which may or may not be genuine (cf.215d,222c) -- he acts like a harmless and playful buffoon, inciting these men to spontaneous applause and laughter (213a,222b). And here, as he selects himself leader of the drinking and overturns the law regarding sobriety, he makes a calculated appeal to the symposiasts' baser appetites, to their Pandemian desire for sensual pleasure (cf.180e). Sensing that beneath every man's moderate, Apollinian exterior beats the heart of the drunken Dionysus. Alcibiades caters to this immoderate substratum of the soul, setting himself up as a bacchic 'messiah of wine'. Whereas these symposiasts should be on guard against this man and his revolutionary potential, they express no fear or antipathy towards Alcibiades, but instead they welcome his presence, and the direction in which he leads their party, with enthusiasm. Alcibiades' rule over this gathering may thus be likened to the tyranny of *eros* over the soul, for these men neither recognize that he has established absolute control over them by appealing to their lower instincts, nor do they appear to resent this tyrannical usurpation. Hence, Alcibiades' autocratic revolution is, ironically, supremely 'democratic' in character: Alcibiades emerges as the 'people's choice', a man who has the blessing of the many and who promises to please them by appealing to the lower part of their souls.[66]

As Socrates reveals in Book VIII of the *Republic*, this is precisely the manner by which democracy ordinarily devolves into tyranny, the most savage slavery emerging peacefully from an extreme condition of freedom or license.[67] The most populous class in a democracy, the philosopher observes, is accustomed to setting up one man as its special leader, fostering him and making him grow great: the potential tyrant comes to power with the people's blessing, being that man most in conformity with the taste of the many. At the outset of his tenure in politics, the nascent tyrant pretends to be gracious and gentle, winning over men's fondness and good will with flattery, honours and gifts. Yet as his power grows, he stirs the mob into an immoderate frenzy through demagoguery, appealing to the basest elements of men's souls, to their envy, jealousy, and love of wealth, in order to enhance his own popularity in the eyes of the many. The decisive moment in the transformation of a popular hero into a tyrant, Socrates maintains, comes when the people's choice blames some other man as the true threat to the integrity of democracy, charging him unjustly with political subversion and convicting him in a kangaroo court. In the philosopher's account of the devolution of regimes, then, it would appear that the openness or freedom that democracy prizes as its greatest strength is in the end the cause of its decline into tyranny. By granting each man license to live as he wishes and to pursue those things which gratify his dominant desires, and by placing a premium upon free speech as a necessary complement of popular rule, democracy is rendered peculiarly vulnerable to the influence of self-serving demagogues, men whose capacity for clever speaking is coupled with a longing for tyrannical rule in the city. Hence, just as Alcibiades rises to power in the *Symposium* as a popular hero who corrupts a sober democracy by appealing to the baser instincts of men, the tyrant, the philosopher concludes in the *Republic*, emerges as a hypocritical champion of the people; as a self-proclaimed defender of democracy whose hidden desire is to enslave men to his will.

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[66] Cf. Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*,op.cit., p.280: "Alcibiades hunts the many or simulates their behaviour in order to dominate them. He is a true son of democracy even in his attempt to become its tyrant."

[67] *Republic*,563e-569c.

This movement towards tyranny in the *Symposium* continues in Alcibiades' confrontation with Eryximachus, the medical expert who had served throughout the night as symposiarch for this little democracy of the elite. As Socrates was taking up Alcibiades' challenge to drink, we are told, Eryximachus arose to confront the demagogue, protesting in effect that immoderate drinking seemed by itself an inappropriate pasttime for human beings, and that accompanying speech or song would be required if they were to maintain their full humanity (214b). Alcibiades, pretending to see the moderate doctor for the first time, immediately appears to defer to the technician's professional competence in matters of health, declaring that all present must of course comply with whatever he judges best for their microcosmic polity. Flattered by this unwarranted praise[41], Eryximachus recalls his earlier proposal for each man to praise Eros, and remarks to Alcibiades "since you have not spoken but have drunk up, it is just (*dikaios*) that you speak".

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[41] I.e.,as we have seen, Eryximachus' earlier account of drunkenness pertained only to the harsh effects of wine upon the body (176c-d): the question of the proper amount of drink falls within his professional competence, *not* the question of what essentially distinguishes the soul of a human being from that of an animal, or what conduces to the civilized character of a polity. That is, the medical expert can prescribe for the health of a man's body, but in matters concerning the health of a man's soul the doctor *qua* doctor remains one of the many, his understanding of the soul's good conditioned by conventional opinions rather than 'professional competence'. Regarding the health of the soul, then, some other kind of erotic expertise is required (cf.186c-d).

In his reply to the technician, Alcibiades grants a certain fittingness to this advice, yet pleads that in his intoxicated condition he cannot, and should not, be bound by their prior resolution:

> "Well, Eryximachus, what you say is fine (or,"noble";*kalos*), but it is not quite equal (*isou*) for a drunken man to be matched against the speeches of the sober. And at the same time, has Socrates really convinced you of anything he just said? Don't you know that things are the exact opposite of what he was saying? For if I praise anyone other than himself, whether a god or a human being, while he is present, he will not keep his hands off me."(214c-d)

Once again, Alcibiades flatters this man, declaring that his concern to defend the prior arrangement evinces a noble character. But immediately following this compliment, the demagogue pleads that his conformity to that arrangement would be unfair or unequal (cf.177e). That is, Alcibiades pleads that *he* would be a victim of gross injustice if he were compelled to adhere to an agreement in which he had no part, and which did not anticipate the inclusion of a drunken man in the eulogistic competition: Alcibiades poses as a defender of egalitarian or democratic justice even as he refuses to be bound by the constitution of this democracy. Moreover, to divert attention away from his own tyrannical ways, Alcibiades suggests in effect that Socrates represents the real threat to the survival of their democratic arrangement, declaring that the philosopher is guilty of demagoguery and extreme hubris. Socrates, Alcibiades maintains, lied when he claimed to fear assault from his former pupil, for in reality it is he who must be on guard against the philosopher's violent reprisals. It is Socrates, he implies, who is the true tyrant, demanding under threat of coercion and violence not only that he be praised above all other men, but that he receive the honour and worship that is justly due to the gods as well -- Socrates is no partisan of either equality or civic piety. By way of licensing his own departure from the terms of the founding compact, then, Alcibiades claims that he must praise Socrates in place of Eros if he is to avoid a violent attack from the hubristic philosopher.[69] Hence, under the pretence that he is a victim of the philosopher's tyrannical will, Alcibiades succeeds in eliminating the final constitutional article of the *ancien regime*, thereby putting the capstone on his autocratic revolution.

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[69] Of course, this departure from the prior agreement to praise Eros may only be apparent, if the power of Socrates is the same as, or explicable in terms of, the power of Eros.

Yet, we should further observe that although Alcibiades' rise to power at this banquet may exemplify the emergence of tyranny from democracy, it nevertheless paves the way for the performance of a most noble deed, the praise of Socrates for his superior strength and manliness. Put otherwise, this tyrannical corruption of a moderate and sober regime culminates in a praise of human virtue or excellence, as Alcibiades sets Socrates up as a model of the true or natural gentleman who can inspire others to achieving similar heights. Alcibiades would thus appear to share a certain kinship with those noble founders or legislators once described to Socrates by Diotima; those intensely erotic men who pursue their personal good through acts of political creation, giving birth to beautiful or noble laws and deeds, and proclaiming noble 'tables of values' which impart order to the lives of subsequent generations (209d-e). Ultimately, then, we see that Alcibiades employs his tyrannical power not to indulge these symposiasts' baser appetites, but to create a powerful image of Socratic virtue which is worthy of imitation by men who long to be noble and good.

Hence, we see that there is a critical ambiguity or duality in Plato's portrayal of Alcibiades in the *Symposium*; an ambiguity which appears to be so carefully drawn that we must suppose it intentional on the part of the author. As we have seen, Alcibiades appears at this banquet intoxicated and unrestrained, a flatterer of men who appeals to the basest desires of their souls in order to enhance his popularity. He employs clever and subtle speech to seduce these symposiasts into compliance with his will, and he corrupts their sobriety to facilitate his own rise to pre-eminence. In short, Alcibiades appears consummately tyrannic, a lover of power who longs for absolute control over the souls of the many. On the other hand, Alcibiades appears in Agathon's doorway as the very image of divinity, proclaims his desire to pay tribute to great wisdom and beauty, demonstrates a noble independence from popular ridicule, and employs the power he achieved through demagogic means to praise the virtue of Socrates. This curious duality in Alcibiades' character is perhaps epitomized by his ambivalence towards the many and towards Socrates. For while he seems preoccupied with accommodating himself to the taste of this elite 'multitude', Alcibiades nevertheless declares that he will not be influenced by their laughter, and he leads their democracy to its nadir in tyranny. And whereas he professes a hostility towards Socrates and his desire to reap vengeance from the man, Alcibiades nonetheless pays tribute to the philosopher for his superior wisdom and proclaims his compulsion to honour Socrates in place of any man or god. Alcibiades thus appears, to be party to two curious love-hate relationships: first, he is drawn to the *demos* and its accolades as a means of securing power, yet at the same time he appears to despise the judgement of the many and longs to tyrannize them; and secondly, he appears to love Socrates, yet at the same time harbours a deep envy and resentment for the man. Alcibiades would seem to be perched mid-way between the city and philosophy, simultaneously drawn towards enslavement to popular honour and attracted to a life of virtue and self-sufficiency.

This ambiguous portrayal of Alcibiades would thus seem to point to a fundamental incoherence or division within the soul of this man; to that psychic war between his kingly and tyrannical longings which found expression in the very first words he uttered in the *Symposium* (212d).[79] Torn between his love for the many and his love for Socrates, Alcibiades is incapable of devoting himself entirely to either of his beloveds, or of gratifying his divided erotic nature: the love he has for the hubristic philosopher causes him to despise the many and to feel shame over his desire for popular praise, yet his irrepressible love of honour causes him to flee from Socrates' speeches about virtue and to embrace the *demos* (216a-c). Most assuredly, Alcibiades is not the only man whose soul houses such a painful contradiction between fundamentally irreconcilable loves. Indeed, this tension between the low and high sides of *eros*, between the Pandemian and Uranian *erotes* (180d-e,187d-e), may well be a defining feature of the human condition: unlike the philosopher, whose soul appears guided by a sovereign love of wisdom which drowns out all competing loves, the remainder of men possess complex souls, with a variety of loves drawing them towards incompatible sources of pleasure. Yet Alcibiades is an exceptionally erotic and spirited man, and the war within his soul between his noble and base instincts accordingly approaches epic proportions. While

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[79] See also Alcibiades' 'apology' for the incoherence of his eulogy of Socrates: his inconsistent speech mirrors the state of his soul (214e215a).In this connection, one might consider Nietzsche's assessment of Alcibiades in Aph. 200 of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

Alcibiades is incapable of satisfying both of his fundamentally incompatible loves simultaneously, he nevertheless appears unwilling to sacrifice either in order to achieve gratification for the other. It is precisely this erotic tension, this titanic tug-of-war between countervailing loves, which appears to fuel Alcibiades' tyrannical disposition: whereas he longs to be with the many and to receive their adoration, his attraction to the beauty of Socrates (or to the self-sufficient life that the philosopher represents) prohibits him from being of the many, and hence he can only rule them tyrannically, from above.

As Alcibiades will reveal in his eulogy of Socrates, this contradiction within his erotic nature was intensified and aggravated as a consequence of his association with the philosopher, or through contact with the strange *logos* of this silenic being. This point alone would seem sufficient to render questionable Diotima's apology for the lover of wisdom in political society, inasmuch as it suggests that Socrates must bear some responsibility for the incoherent and unstable character of Alcibiades' soul. Judged by conventional democratic standards (or at least by the standards of the little democracy established in the *Symposium*), Alcibiades is neither moderate nor just, and hence his educator would seem at least partially to blame for the emergence of this tyrannic man in a democracy, having fuelled his hubristic disdain for the multitude and its vulgar standards of virtue. Yet, as we shall see, while Alcibiades does bring Socrates' hubris to court in his speech, calling upon these men to sit in judgement of the philosopher's "arrogance" (*hyperephanias*;219c), he nevertheless offers a most powerful defence of Socrates against the charge that he corrupts the youth, proclaiming that through his association with this unique human being he was compelled to love the beauty of virtue and to strive for a condition of nobility and goodness. In the end, however, we must attempt to explain why Alcibiades appeared to fail in his quest for that form of psychic harmony which is both noble and good. Why did he not successfully sublimate or channel his *eros* toward achieving a condition of Socratic self-sufficiency, but instead fell back towards his desire to be with the many? Why, we must ask, was the appeal of the philosophic life insufficient for Alcibiades (and men like him;cf.222b)? What quality of his erotic nature barred him from full devotion to and participation in the Socratic example? And finally, what does the failure of Alcibiades reveal about the divisions within the human soul, and about the status of *eros* as a primordial love of beauty and the good?

4. Alcibiades Contra Socrates:

The Vivisection of a Philosopher

> "Certainly there may be other means of finding oneself, of coming to oneself out of the bewilderment in which one usually wanders as in a dark cloud, but I know of none better than to think on one's true educators. And so today, I shall remember one of the teachers and taskmasters of whom I can boast."
>
> Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer as Educator*, #1

The speech that Alcibiades delivers before this transformed polity is advertised as a eulogy of Socrates, a praise of the philosopher's superior power and manliness (cf.212b). The overriding theme of this encomium is the strangeness (*atopian*; lit:"out of placeness") of Socrates, his enigmatic and nearly incomprehensible nature: the philosopher, Alcibiades declares, can be likened to no human being, not even to the heroes imagined by the poets, for his sort of being is comparable only to mythic non-human creatures, to daemonic satyrs and sileni (215a,221d). We recall that Eryximachus had earlier omitted Socrates from his scientific taxonomy of human powers, admitting his inability to account for the philosopher's superhuman strength and self-control (176c). Yet, whereas Socrates may remain inexplicable and unclassifiable to the mind of the natural scientist and technical expert, Alcibiades professes his capacity to account for the philosopher through poetry, or through images which illuminate his hidden drives and motivations. Following the example of Socrates' Diotima, Alcibiades aims through his speech to reveal certain esoteric mysteries; mysteries concerning the philosopher, his nature and his practice, which are suitable for the hearing of only the most capable initiates, those who have experienced the madness and bacchic frenzy of philosophy (218b).

As eulogies go, however, the one delivered by Alcibiades on this night of celebration is exceedingly strange. For the philerast announces to these men his intention to assault the philosopher through speech (214e), and he later claims that in speaking he has mixed praise of Socrates' beauty and courage with a damning condemnati[illegible]f his hubris (222b). Indeed, as Alcibiades makes clear at the very centre of his speech, his description of Socrates represents a powerful indictment of the philosopher for his hubristic treatment of noble young men, and his audience (which, we must remember, includes the reader of the *Symposium*) is in reality a jury called upon to render its verdict on the philosopher's "arrogance" (*hyperephanias*;219c). Alcibiades' satirical portrait of Socrates thus harbours within it a serious charge of political irresponsibility, alleging that the philosopher's hubris, a manifestation of his trans-political *eros* is the proximate cause of madness and injustice in the youth and hence a threat to the well-being of the polity. In reading Alcibiades' account of Socrates, then, we are challenged to judge the philosopher's nature and practice, to comprehend the basis of his superior power over men, and to evaluate his effect upon the political community.

Yet Alcibiades' encomium has a dual emphasis, being as much (if not more) an autobiography as it is a praise of the philosopher. Like the erotic eulogies delivered by both Aristophanes and Socrates, Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* is a recollection or remembrance, a foray into the past which serves to elucidate the present. In recalling his association with Socrates, Alcibiades permits us to witness the forces which shaped his soul as a young man, thereby allowing us to comprehend how he became what he is. The final speech of the dialogue, at once a confession of an undying erotic obsession and an account of the great psychic torment caused by *eros*, presents the reader with a portrait of an educational odyssey; of the tempestuous journey of a young and beautiful soul from its first contact with a philosopher's *logos* to its end or completion as a result of this erotic relationship. Much like Socrates' own speech, the eulogy delivered by Alcibiades to close out this night of celebration accounts for a major 'turn' in his life, a fundamental revolution in the character of his soul that resulted from his intercourse with a philosopher. Ultimately, then, we learn more about Alcibiades from this eulogy than we do about Socrates, as the philerast reveals to us the character of his own innermost drives, and repeatedly draws our attention to the *effect* that Socrates' speeches and deeds had upon his youthful soul. Hence, it would appear that the judgement of Socrates that the *Symposium* challenges us to render requires of us that we first strive to comprehend and evaluate Alcibiades, the product of a distinctly Socratic nurture.

As I hope to show, a careful reading of Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* does yield sufficient evidence to render a verdict in favour of the philosopher, insofar as it reveals that the philosophic *eros* can have an ennobling or beautifying effect upon high-spirited men. For while Alcibiades overtly professes that it was his youthful curiousity and his noble desire for self-perfection which impelled him towards the enigmatic Socrates, he nevertheless reveals that his real motivation in pursuing the philosopher was his profound longing for tyrannical power in the city and beyond: the young Alcibiades was driven by a voracious appetite for honour and political power, and he hoped that Socrates might assist him in realizing his tyrannical aspirations. Yet as a consequence of Socrates' hubristic rebuke of Alcibiades' sexual overtures, the soul of this young man experienced a revolutionary transformation, coming to desire that truly noble form of power which attends virtue or human excellence. Humbled by the philosopher's insolent laughter, and brought to the harsh realization that his own beauty paled in comparison with the hidden beauty manifested by Socrates, Alcibiades resolved to model himself after the example of this unique and powerful being, and to live in accordance with the philosopher's speeches on nobility and goodness. Through his association with Socrates, the *eros* of this high-spirited philerast was sublimated, directed away from the shameful desire for political tyranny towards a noble longing for virtue and self-mastery: Socrates' speeches and deeds, we are led to conclude, ennobled or beautified Alcibiades, inspiring within this potential tyrant the desire to be a gentleman.

4.1 Dionysian Images

Having announced his intention to praise Socrates in place of Eros, Alcibiades wonders whether the philosopher will allow the truth about him to be spoken (214e). This is a curious question on the part of Alcibiades: Why would anyone, and especially a former associate of a philosopher, suspect that the genuine lover of wisdom might be hostile to the truth? As we reflect upon the present circumstances, however, it becomes clear that the issue at hand is not hostility to the truth simply, but rather a reluctance to *speaking* the truth in public, and the dialogues of Plato provide ample evidence that the philosopher is not above employing noble lies when he judges that frank disclosure of the truth might have deleterious political consequences. But whereas Socrates might well prefer to have the truth about his nature and practice remain hidden behind masks of irony and deception (216e), he here has no choice but to proclaim himself a partisan of honesty and to grant Alcibiades permission to speak freely: the philosopher is about to be indicted for his hubris by this vengeful philerast, and a reluctance on his part to having the whole truth told would be tantamount to entering a plea of guilty before the charges had even been read. Hence Alcibiades' question to Socrates, which initially appears to be the product of a drunken and incoherent mind, is in reality a shrewd forensic ploy which serves to emphasize the juridical atmosphere in which this speech will be delivered--philosophy is being brought to the bar of the city, with Alcibiades as judge, prosecutor, and counsel for the defence.

In accordance with Socrates' command, Alcibiades promises to be truthful in speaking so far as he has the will. Such an admission of a weakness with regard to honesty might well cause the symposiasts (and the reader) to wonder whether this eulogy of Socrates will indeed reveal the whole truth about the philosopher. Yet Alcibiades immediately pre-empts this suspicion by offering the philosopher the opportunity to cross-examine his testimony at any point in the proceedings. Should any falsehood happen to be entered into the record, Alcibiades remarks to Socrates, "check me in the middle if you want to and say in what respect I am telling a lie"--a challenge repeated three more times in the course of his speech, but never expressly accepted by the philosopher (cf.216a,217b,219c).[71] That is, Alcibiades requests of Socrates that he perform for this speech that same function which the notorious *daimonion* was reputed to have performed for the philsopher's soul; namely, to exert a negative or prohibitive influence on his words and deeds.[72] Thus, even as he takes vengeance on Socrates for his hubris, Alcibiades admits his continuing dependence upon the philosopher as a guardian of his virtue, thereby revealing the extent to which his break with Socrates was incomplete.

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[71] However, that Socrates chooses not to interrupt this speech or to protest against any element does not strictly prove its veracity -- the philosopher, we will see, may have very good reasons for remaining silent.

[72] Consider *Theages*,128d; *Apology*,40a-b.

The opening lines of Alcibiades' eulogy emphasize the highly poetic character of the speech he will deliver on this night:

> "I will attempt to praise Socrates in this way men, through images (*eikonon*). Now, on the one hand he will likely believe that this is for the sake of raising a laugh; but on the other hand, the image (*eikon*) will be for the sake of the truth, not for the sake of the laughable."(215a)

This promise to praise the philosopher through images is immediately fulfilled by Alcibiades, as he likens Socrates in his uniqueness to daemonic creatures, to the drunken and lustful sileni and the hubristic satyr Marsyas (215b;cf.221d-e). Yet in the second sentence of this statement of poetic method, Alcibiades refers not to a plurality of images but to a single image or icon which will reveal the truth about Socrates. The entire speech of Alcibiades is this image: it is a poetic portrayal of events which points toward a general truth concerning the philosopher's association with high-spirited men, or a satyr drama in which the silenic Socrates plays the lead role (222b-c).

This image, Alcibiades stresses, will not be constructed in order to please men and elicit their laughter, but will have as its goal a truthful depiction of the philosopher's nature. With his seemingly innocuous and trivial speeches, the philosopher may well appear ridiculous to imprudent and foolish men, this appearance making him susceptible to comedic treatment (221e). Nevertheless, Alcibiades here refuses to imitate Aristophanes by making Socrates an object of popular ridicule for the many who cannot understand him--his image of the philosopher will not restage the fiasco of *The Clouds*. Laughter corrupts the judgement of men, leaving them unable to think seriously about that which has been rendered ridiculous in their eyes; consequently, it is to be avoided by men who are good guardians of justice, or by those who are called upon to judge the hubris of the philosopher and its effect upon men in the city. [73] Hence, in what must be taken as a criticism directed at Aristophanes and his public treatment of Socrates, Alcibiades opts for satire over comedy as the proper poetic medium for portraying the philosophic nature and practice. Refusing to use humour in an accusatory or forensic fashion, and proclaiming instead that his funny and playful imagery has truth as its end or *telos*, Alcibiades reveals that he is a practitioner of Socratic poetry, of a philosophic brand of image-making which disregards audience approval, and which points beyond itself to the truth about the being it purports to represent.[74] Indeed, as the philerast suggests at one point in his eulogy, this image of Socrates is more than un-Aristophanic in style and purpose, but may even be seen as a response to this famed accusor of philosophy. That is, this image may serve as a defence of Socrates against the charges voiced by the poet in *The Clouds*; or, more precisely, as a reminder to the comedian and to all who endorse his critique of Socrates that the philosopher possesses sufficient courage, power, and prudence to defend himself vigorously against all attacks by the non-wise (221a-b). It is the substance of this defence that we must strive to uncover in examining Alcibiades' Socratic imagery.

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[73] See *Republic*,388e,452c-d. We should note that while Alcibiades' eulogy will be received with raucous laughter, this laughter will be directed not at the subject of the praise but at the author of the image, who in his peroration makes himself seem like a frustrated lover deprived of the object of his passion (222b).

Socrates, Alcibiades declares, can best be comprehended with the aid of two strange images. First, the philosopher is like the toy sileni found in the agora, those statues of daemonic flute-playing creatures which have an altogether ugly and ridiculous appearance, yet which reveal captivating images of gods when they are "opened up". Moreover, Socrates bears a likeness to Marsyas, a woodland satyr famous for inventing a distinctive form of flute-music. Insofar as the beginning may be judged most important in all things, we should pause here to consider carefully the images chosen by Alcibiades to open his praise of Socrates.

First, there are dimensions of these images which are left unspoken by Alcibiades, yet which must be brought to the surface if we are to grasp the full significance of this Socratic likeness. Sileni and satyrs, daemonic mixtures of god and beast, were notorious for their ugliness, and hence in that respect seem suitable models for the pug-nosed and pot-bellied philosopher. Yet as Alcibiades will momentarily declare, Socrates' likeness to these woodland spirits is not restricted to his outward look or form (*eidos*), but embraces "inner" qualities as well. The sileni were lusty and immoderate creatures, famous for their erotic potency as well as their capacity for wine. As attendants of Dionysus, these mythic *daemons* were associated by the Greeks with tragic poetry. Yet their ugliness coupled with their bawdiness also made them popular subjects for comic depiction by Athenian poets. Along with their intemperate and playful dispositions, however, the sileni were reputed to possess great intellectual gifts, and were noted for their wisdom and irony. Indeed, one such creature, dubbed Silenus, was entrusted by the gods with the monumental task of educating the intractable Dionysus. Silenic wisdom was reputed to consist in knowledge of esoteric mysteries, which the elusive sileni would reveal only to those who made a successful bid for their capture (cf.217a). In a famous story about one such revelation, King Midas of Macedonia captured Silenus after a long and difficult chase, and ordered him to reveal the truth about the human good. In his response, Silenus painted a discomforting portrait of human existence: the best thing for a man is never to have been born, to be nothing; second best is to die early (cf.218e-219a). [75]

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[74] *Republic*, 487e,510b-511a.

Satyrs were closely related to sileni, sharing many attributes of appearance and disposition. Marsyas was a musical satyr whose downfall was occasioned by his hubris and impiety. Having discovered a magical flute that had been discarded by Athene, Marsyas became famous throughout Phrygia for the beauty and power of his music. This reputation provoked the anger of the lyre-playing Apollo, who challenged Marsyas to a musical contest, the winner of which would select whatever penalty he wished for the loser. In an act of overweening pride, Marsyas accepted this challenge, attempting to prove himself musically superior to the divine. But he lost the competition, and as punishment for his hubris he was skinned alive by Apollo. Socrates, who is hubristic after the fashion of Marsyas, suffers a similar penalty in the *Symposium*, his satyric hide peeled off to reveal his soul in its nakedness (215b,221e).

Secondly, in likening Socrates to the toy sileni whose ugly exterior conceals a wondrous inner beauty, Alcibiades introduces a theme which will arise repeatedly in the course of his speech: both Socrates himself and his speeches are ironic, concealing their true nature behind a deceptive screen. For example, Socrates only appears to be erotically inclined towards the bodies of beautiful young men, Alcibiades will claim, whereas in reality he is a paragon of moderation who has nothing but contempt for physical beauty (216d). Moreover, whereas Socrates continually professes his ignorance and employs speeches which seem trivial and foolish, the truth about the philosopher is that he knows much about the excellence of men, and that his *logos* alone reveals what is required in a gentleman, a noble and good man (216e;221e-222a). Socrates appears to be ugly and ridiculous to the many senseless human beings who are predisposed to laughing at him, yet once one has penetrated this laughable exterior one sees that it is nothing but a "silenic guise" that he has wrapped around himself to deceive men. The philosopher is a master manipulator of appearances, making himself appear ugly when in reality he harbours the most striking beauty within, presenting himself as useless when he alone can assist the noble fulfillment of human nature, and feigning a weakness which conceals his true courage and strength.

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[75] *Oxford Classical Dictionnary*,p.956. The story of Silenus' horrifying revelation to Midas is retold by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* (section 3) as the paradigm of Dionysian insight into the horrible truth about existence.

In order to see the great distance which separates appearance from reality in the case of the philosopher, then, one must "open up" Socrates and his speeches, and embark upon an adventurous journey within (221e)-- a journey which is guaranteed to leave one perplexed and in quandary, yet one which ultimately promises to lead the prudent man to a life of genuine power and independence. Alcibiades' eulogy of Socrates is thus a 'vivisection' of the philosopher. It is a slicing open of this enigmatic and deceptive human being to reveal the mysterious inner workings of his soul, and to comprehend how he simultaneously attracts and repels men around him. Such a look inside the forbidden zone of the philosopher's soul, Alcibiades will confess, came to him as a matter of chance or luck (*tuche*;217a). Yet through his poetic depiction of Socrates, he aims to sidestep fortune and to initiate others into these divine secrets, to publicize the philosophic nature and to acquaint these symposiasts with its extraordinary beauty and power (216c). In praising Socrates, Alcibiades turns amateur psychologist, exposing the soul of the philosopher so that those present may wonder about its many "amazing" (*thaumaston*) attributes. [76]

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[76] The term *thaumaston* ("marvelous", "amazing" or "wondrous"; that which is worthy of human wonder) is applied to Socrates by Alcibiades no less than twelve times in

Finally, while it may reveal the philosopher as a being worthy of human wonder, this public exposure of the philosophic soul would appear to pose some considerable danger to the philosophic enterprise. That this is so is suggested by that very term used repeatedly by Alcibiades for "opening up" Socrates and his *logos* (*dichadzo*;215b,216d,e,221d,222a). This term had figured prominently in the myth concocted by Aristophanes earlier in the evening, being the word used by the comedian to describe Zeus' bisection of our ancient ancestors as punishment for their hubristic assault upon the gods (*diatemo dicha*;190d). Just as that act of cutting succeeded in weakening the circle-men, depriving them of that strength and robustness which had served their proud aspirations, so too does the exposure of the "inner" Socrates threaten to cripple philosophy and to depreciate its power.

As Alcibiades will point out, the deceptive disguise of Socrates and his speeches makes him appear laughable to the many; consequently it would appear to be a source of protection for the philosopher, allowing his true nature to remain hidden from profane and rustic eyes, and thereby permitting him to have unimpeded intercourse with those whom he chooses to educate. Moreover, as the the philerast will confess, it was the secrecy and mysteriousness of Socrates, the fact that he appeared to prudent men to know much more than he openly professed, which served as a source of attraction for spirited and talented youth like himself, young men who divined that the philosopher might assist their ambition and reveal to them what is truly good for a human being. Esoteric or ironic presentation, the capacity to be interpreted as one thing by the many and something else by the few, the ability to simultaneously repel and fascinate (as appropriate) different types of human beings, would seem to be a source of great power to philosophy, allowing it to remain an exclusive and therefore serious way of life.

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[76](cont'd) this speech. These references include Socrates' head (213c), his "music" (215b), his power (216c), his psychic images of divinity (217a), his capacity to assist young men (217a), his daimonic soul (219c), his immunity to drunkenness (220a), his manly deeds in war (220a), his daylong meditation (220c), his many praiseworthy traits (221c), his uniqueness among human beings (221c), and his general mode of being (222c). One might confidently conclude that Alcibiades considers Socrates, or the philosopher in general, the most compelling subject for thought and exploration.

Yet in "opening up" the philosopher's soul, in publicizing mysteries about Socrates with only the feeble qualification that the profane and uninitiated should themselves refuse to listen (218b), Alcibiades may be seen as doing violence to the philosopher and his activity. By proclaiming to all present that Socrates is in reality nothing like what he appears to be[77], Alcibiades disarms the philosopher of that shield of invisibility which had protected both himself and his way of life from public scrutiny. And by revealing the mysterious inner power and beauty of Socrates to all who have ears to listen, Alcibiades deprives the philosopher of the allure that mystery has for erotic and spirited young men. For just as in matters of common human sexuality, *eros* thrives on the forbidden and the mysterious. Yet often when this mystery is finally uncloaked, the awe and fascination which had attended and even intensified the lover's passion are quickly dissipated.

The attempt to penetrate and comprehend the esoteric dimension of philosophy, to "open up" the philosopher and discover the images of virtue that lie concealed beneath his seemingly incomprehensible *logos*, may well represent the epitome of the philosophic life, being coterminus with the attempt to understand the origin of philosophy itself, the psychic drive or impulse which compels a man to devote his entire life to overcoming his ignorance. Such an endeavour might be looked upon as the model of a genuinely liberal (i.e.,liberating) education, requiring of the student that he train the whole of his soul (its passionate as well as its rational faculties), that he acquire an appreciation for great subtlety and beauty, and that he comprehend a natural standard of human excellence which enables him to distinguish good from bad, noble from base. Yet the capacity to undertake such a life-long endeavour (or, more precisely, the capacity to see its value and the willingness or desire to devote oneself fully to it) would itself appear to be a mark of distinction among men, a sign of a natural nobility of character: as Diotima taught Socrates, men with vulgar natures have no longing to pursue knowledge about virtue or nobility, for they erroneously believe that they have a sufficient amount (204a). Hence, by ensuring that his words will be heard differently by men with different loves and preoccupations, the irony of the philosopher succeeds in driving a wedge between natural human types. It repels the vulgar many who are content with their transitory and parochial opinions about virtue, yet at the same time attracts the noble few who long for power and self-enhancement, whose ear for subtlety is combined with an intense love of the beautiful and the good. Yet it would seem that Alcibiades threatens to neutralize this aristocratic tendency of the philosopher's *logos* with his vivisection of Socrates: he proclaims to a group of men with heterogeneous natures that he has seen the divine images hidden deep in Socrates' breast, and he thereby offers *gratis* to others an insight that he himself had to earn through a painful and tortuous ordeal. Alcibiades' "opening up" of Socrates would thus appear to represent that vengeful assault upon the philosopher that he had earlier promised (213d,214e): it is a punishment of Socrates for his hubristic stance towards the divine and the human, just as the circle-men had been punished with bisection for their proud and impious thoughts, and just as Marsyas had been flayed alive by Apollo for challenging the musical supremacy of the gods.

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[77] Of course, as Alcibiades reminds us in his speech, these men present at the home of Agathon do not represent a cross-section of human types found in the city. These are urbane, sophisticated men, who have all experienced the "viper's bite" of philosophy, and who are therefore licensed to hear these mysteries (218b). Nonetheless, we are compelled to wonder whether the conventional nobility of these symposiasts entails a natural nobility of character, particularly since the first five speakers (with the possible exception of Aristophanes) praised pederasty as far superior to mature love between man and woman. In fact, the very *sophist*ication of these men, their acquaintance with prevailing philosophic doctrines, may well be related to their apparent decadence, insofar as it appears to have liberated them from the moderating influences of traditional morality.

In light of this, it is a matter worthy of great wonder that Socrates chooses to remain *silent* throughout this divestment of his silenic garb. Why, we must ask, would a man who has the power to protect himself against life-threatening assaults (221b), and who is unbeatable when it comes to speaking (213e), never once rise in his own defence when the very integrity of his way of life seems to be at risk? Upon reflection, there would appear to be two reasons which, taken separately or together, explain and justify the philosopher's silence. First, insofar as Alcibiades splits Socrates in two, there is no guarantee that the portrait of the man that he presents to the symposiasts constitutes the whole story about the philosophic nature. Owing to Alcibiades' limited understanding of Socrates, or his own capacity for ironic speech (222c), it remains a possibility that in this strange eulogy we are permitted to behold merely one-half of the truth about Socrates, in which case Alcibiades has not succeeded in de-mystifying the philosopher completely. Indeed, inasmuch as Alcibiades repeatedly emphasizes the "uniqueness" of Socrates, the lack of any human equivalent for his sort of being, this ostensible revelation of the philosophic nature actually succeeds in rendering the old satyr more enigmatic, more mysterious, more inexplicable--the unique, we might say, is by its very definition opaque and difficult to fathom. Hence, there may be dimensions of the philosophic soul and its *eros* which remain even more deeply concealed beneath the silenic guise of Socrates, the nature of which we are left to speculate on (cf.189e,191d). Secondly, although this vivisection of the philosopher is apparently motivated by a desire for vengeance, and while it culminates in an indictment of Socrates for his hubris, it may be that it contains a most powerful defence of the philosopher's place in political society nonetheless. That is, in recalling how Socrates alone had the power to tame ambitious philerasts and to redirect their *eros* toward the beauty of virtue or human excellence, Alcibiades actually presents us with a vindication of the philosophic *eros* and its effect upon the youth in the city. In either of these cases, or both, the silence of Socrates would appear to make good sense.

4.2 Socratic Music

Like the sileni and Marsyas, Alcibiades declares, Socrates is a fluteplayer, a charmer of souls with his 'music'. Yet the 'fluting' of the philosopher, we learn, is far more amazing than that of the hubristic satyr. For while Marsyas and his son Olympus played powerful and divine music, and while their music continues in posterity to possess the souls of listeners and to inspire within them a longing for union with the gods, Socrates achieves the same effect through "naked speech" (*psilois logois*) devoid of ornamentation (215c). The philosopher's only instrument is his mouth, and his speeches have an extraordinary musical quality: Socrates is a "pied piper of conscience", working a magic upon the souls of men through his *logos*, and revealing to them their dire need of virtue. Like the *eros* described by Diotima, then, Socratic *logos* is daemonic or intermediate, revealing to men their psychic deficiencies, and pointing beyond itself to a divine condition of virtue or excellence.

Along with Socrates the man, the issue of Socratic or philosophic *logos* dominates the final speech of the *Symposium*, being described three times and reported once by Alcibiades (215c-216a,218a,221d-222a,218e). In light of Socrates' own eulogy of Eros, this great emphasis upon the philosopher's dialectical speech, his strange or unique mode of expression, would appear to be entirely appropriate. For in her account of the ascent toward Beauty itself, Diotima had described to Socrates a fifth stage of aesthetic realization where the lover, in beholding the vast expanse of beauty in knowledge or reason, would be liberated from enslavement to beautiful appearances, and would give birth with ungrudging love of wisdom to many beautiful and magnificent speeches and thoughts (210c-d). With his immunity to physical beauty and his arrogant disdain for the things cherished and called good by non-philosophic men, the Socrates we encounter in Alcibiades' recollection reveals that he has attained this penultimate stage of the ladder leading to the perfect form of the beautiful. Accordingly, his *eros* discharges itself in the creation of noble speeches, speeches which have the noble and the good as their dominant theme (221e). Earlier speakers had eulogized the work or deeds of Eros, praising the god's profound effect upon human beings. Yet the philosopher's most important and splendid deeds are his speeches, and hence it is his bewitching *logos* which receives the lion's share of Alcibiades' attention in this encomium.

This initial description of the power of Socrates' *logos* is replete with exaggeration, ignoring the fact (later acknowledged) that the greater part of humanity, lacking in prudence and a desire for virtue, find the philosopher ridiculous and laugh at his speeches (221e). In truth, the songs of Marsyas have a popular appeal that the philosopher's speeches can never have. Yet even as it distorts the facts concerning Socrates' music, Alcibiades' image continues to serve the truth, revealing to us the essential characteristics of the philosopher's educational practice, and pointing us towards an understanding of what compelled philerastic men to associate with a being like Socrates.

First, Alcibiades describes the effect of Socrates' speeches upon human beings in general:

> "We, at any rate, whenever we hear the speeches of anyone else--no matter how good an orator he is--just about no one cares (*melei*). But whenever any one of us

> hears you or another speaking your speeches, even if the speaker is very poor, regardless of whether a woman, a man, or a lad hears them, we are thunderstruck and possessed."(215d;cf.173c)

In this account of the magic of Socrates' *logoi*, Alcibiades divorces the power of the philosopher's speech from the qualities of the man himself and from the style or mode of presentation. The amazing effect of Socratic *logos* does not depend upon its being spoken by Socrates himself, nor is it achieved through a flamboyant or rhetorically polished form of expression, but rather it derives from the substance of that which is articulated through the speech, from *what* is said rather than *how* it is said, or by whom. Like Marsyas, Socrates is a founder of a unique form of music which has, so to speak, a life independent of the musician or speaker, and which may be played by followers or associates of the composer with no apparent loss in power or effect. In making the virtues and vices of men the subject of his *logos*, Socrates is the inventor of a form of speech which far surpasses in power that brand of speech practiced by the orators and poets, and which addresses the permanent concerns of mankind.

Moreover, we may infer from this description of the effect of Socratic speech that its uniqueness and superiority derive from its inherent beauty or nobility. Those human beings whose souls are insinuated by the philosopher's *logos* are left possessed and "thunderstruck" (*ekpeplegmenoi*)--a condition of awe and amazement which accompanies the apprehension of wondrous beauty (198b-c,215d,216d). While it may appear dry and repetitive to the many, the dialectical speech of the philosopher in reality maintains a highly seductive character, inciting the *eros* of those whose ears are penetrated by the incomparable beauty of its theme, and causing their souls to fall victim to a curious form of demonic possession.

Socratic *logos* would thus appear to share a certain kinship with tragic music or poetry. As Alcibiades will momentarily confess, under the power of the philosopher's speeches he and "many many others" (*allous pampollous*) experienced a curious mixture of pleasure and pain, ecstacy and suffering: in hearing Socrates' words, the soul of a human being is inspired by their portrayal of the beauty of virtue, yet at the same time is compelled to feel shame over its own deficiencies in this regard and its enslavement to base and ignoble desires

(215e). The music of Socrates, a distinctive form of speech which combines the moral and the aesthetic, beauty and virtue, appeals to the soul's primordial longing to have intercourse with the beautiful or the noble (*kalos*), and forces upon men the painful realization that their souls remain far from this condition of refinement. (215e-216a;cf.173a,211d).

In the second half of this description of Socratic *logos* and its impact upon men, Alcibiades personalizes the account, testifying to the effect that the philosopher's speeches once had upon his own soul (and would still today, if he had the will to listen).[78] Through his association with Socrates, Alcibiades became profoundly dissatisfied with the state of his soul, coming to despise his enslavement to shameful desires, and specifically his overwhelming preoccupation with attaining popular praise and honour. Faced with the sublime beauty depicted in Socrates' *logos*, Alcibiades professes, he reached the opinion that his slavish and ignoble way of life was not worth living (216a;cf.211d). While this philerast was driven by his nature into politics, into the public domain wherein honour and power are objects of competitive striving, Socrates compelled him to agree that this quest for public notoriety brought considerable harm to his soul, causing him to neglect the virtue that it was truly in need of. Socrates speeches accomplished something quite extraordinary, Alcibiades declares, something that no other human being could achieve or even imagine possible: Socrates made the vain-glorious Alcibiades feel shame over the viciousness of his love of honour and the vulgarity of his soul. To escape this pain and torment, the young man fled from the philosopher's seductive discourse like a runaway slave, taking refuge in the pleasure he received by being the darling of the many (216b).[79]

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[78] With this qualification, Alcibiades subtly reveals the extent to which he has exaggerated the 'poetic' quality of Socrates' musical *logos*: Alcibiades' own experience with Socrates proves that the philosopher's dialectical speeches *are* resistable.

[79] Indeed, Alcibiades here likens Socrates to the Sirens, those melodious enchanters of mankind who stole men away from their families and communities by promising to impart knowledge of all great things (cf.Homer, *Odyssey*, xii.39ff.). Like Odysseus before the bewitching Sirens, Alcibiades "stopped up his ears", refusing to be seduced by Socrates' *logoi* into leading an idle life of speech and contemplation (216a; cf.Aristophanes, *Frogs*,l.1491). Notice, then, that Socrates here appears as the seducer rather than the object of seduction, and that Alcibiades' aversion to the contemplative life was an aversion to its *idleness*--men who do not perform deeds which please the many do not receive public honour in a democracy.

Through intercourse with Socrates' music, then, the soul of this intensely erotic man was subjected to a forceful assault. The philosopher's appeal to the beauty of the virtuous and self-sufficient life incited a fierce war within Alcibiades, as his low and high drives, his base and noble longings, struggled for conquest over the whole territory of his soul. Alcibiades' reason was compelled to behold in Socrates' speeches a noble vision of human fulfillment that awakened the Uranian dimension of his *eros* and caused him to feel shame over the ugliness of his soul. Yet his spirited desire for glory and power resisted this noble influence, and continued to draw his soul towards the political affairs of Athens. As a result of his contact with Socratic music, with a form of music that insinuates to the core of the *psyche* and seduces its longing for intercourse with the beautiful or noble, Alcibiades' soul fell victim to the most extreme disharmony and tension--the strange songs of the satyr strained this man's soul like a wishbone. Education may well be a delicate erotic enterprise, directed towards achieving a harmony amongst the bestial and divine loves of the soul, towards creating a civilized human being or gentleman by balancing contrary erotic drives (cf.187c-d). Yet, as Alcibiades' testimony reveals, the path to such a harmonious condition of soul demands that one endure considerable pain along the way, being forced to confront one's deficiencies and vices as a first step to self-overcoming. True education, the liberation of the soul from enslavement to conventional opinions and prejudices and the channeling of its *eros* toward the beauty of the self-sufficient life, would thus appear to be an experience suited only for the strong of heart, those human beings whose love of the good dominates all other passions in their souls.

Finally, we should note that in this description of Socrates' speeches and their effect upon the soul, Alcibiades reveals to us perhaps the greatest attraction of philosophy for high-spirited and intensely erotic young men -- *power*. While Alcibiades confesses that he too experienced the demonic possession induced by the satyr's songs, he further reveals that, unlike the "many many others", he belonged to a comparatively smaller class of men, a class numbering only "many others" (*alloi polloi*; 216c,222b), who reflected upon and were impressed by the immense power afforded to the philosopher by his unique capacity for speaking. When he was young, Alcibiades tells these jurors, he considered Pericles to be a very good speaker, yet he found that even this great statesman and orator could not compare with Socrates in his ability to influence and control men through speech (215e). Moreover, in addition to his bewitching effect over most human beings, Socrates, Alcibiades testifies, had sufficient power in his *logos* to perform an amazing feat hitherto unaccomplished by any man -- Socrates conquered the soul of Alcibiades himself. This high-spirited and unrestrainable man, who considered himself capable of ruling Athens (and even the world) while still in the bloom of his youth[10], was made to feel shame by Socrates' speeches, and found himself unable to contradict the philosopher or to disobey any of his commands ***while in his presence*** (216b). One who possessed this great power in his speeches, this ambitious man must have imagined, could have unassailable power in the city, being able to command the souls of both the weak many and the strong few, and thereby eliminating all obstacles to the imposition of one's personal will upon the regime.[11] It was thus Alcibiades' grand political ambition, his 'tyrannical' urge or his philerastic lust for honour and power, which made Socratic speech so attractive to him, and which drove him ever closer to the philosopher despite the pain and torment he claims to have experienced as a consequence of this association.

4.3 Socratic Power: Moderation and Hubris

This interpretation of Alcibiades' ambitious motives for consorting with the philosopher is immediately ratified by the philerast, as he turns from the issue of Socrates' speeches to the nature of the man himself:

> "And I and many others have been affected in such ways by the flute songs of this satyr before us. But as to the rest, hear me tell how he is like those to whom I have likened him, and how amazing is the power (***dunamin***) he has." (216b-c)

What most impressed Alcibiades about Socrates and his strange music, what captivated this young man's imagination and peaked his curiousity, was the power which seemed to emanate from his every word and deed. Alcibiades was driven by his *eros*, more precisely by his love of rule and pre-eminence, to associate with Socrates, in the hope that he might be educated by the philosopher into this unique form of omnipotence.[12]

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[10] See *Alcibiades I*,104e-105e.

[11] Indeed, he might even have imagined employing this power of making the weaker speech the stronger to make a buffoon of the great Pericles himself, and therewith to demonstrate his superior merit as ruler of Athens.(Cf.Xenophon,***Memorabilia***, I.ii.40-47).

Alcibiades recognizes that his claim regarding Socrates' wondrous power will be greeted with skepticism by the symposiasts (who have, recall, spent the past few hours with the man, and have heard him speak at length). Like most men, they would hardly regard the philosopher, whose only deeds consist in his speeches, to be superior in power and stature to a great statesman like Pericles, or even to a promising young commander like Alcibiades himself. Yet Alcibiades proclaims to these men that not one of them is acquainted with the real Socrates, with the soul which remains concealed beneath a fragile and miserable appearance, and he declares that he will enable them to see clearly beyond the philosopher's silenic guise: Alcibiades promises to dispel their skepticism by displaying the true grounds of Socratic power.

This revelatory language invoked by Alcibiades is reminiscent of language employed earlier by Aristophanes in his praise of Eros. For at the outset of his eulogy, the poet proclaimed that human beings remain deplorably ignorant of the splendid power possessed by this deity, and that this ignorance was the cause of great injustice being committed against the god: although Eros' power entitles him to the greatest altars and sacrifices, such pious worship is entirely absent from human conduct. To redress this injustice, Aristophanes promised to initiate all men into the power of Eros, to teach these symposiasts about his potent force so that they in turn might be educators of others. Eros, he declared, is most deserving of human wonder and reverence, as he is "...the most philanthropic (*philanthropotatos*;lit:"most loving of humans) of the gods, a helper of human beings as well as a physician dealing with an illness the healing of which would result in the greatest happiness for the human race"(189d). Eros is a competent servant of nature, furnishing human beings the means of recapturing the natural unity and wholeness that they forfeited long ago as a consequence of their impiety and injustice (193c-d). In Alcibiades' revelation of sacred mysteries, however, the power of Socrates replaces the power of Eros as a matter worthy of recognition and worship by human beings. Hence, we are compelled to wonder whether the philosopher's power is directed towards the same end declared by Aristophanes to be the *telos* of love; to wonder whether Socrates, through his effect upon young men in the city, has the power to assist the fulfillment of human nature, and therein to bring great happiness to the race of man.

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[12] Consider Xenophon, *Memorabilia*,I.ii.16.

Socrates' power, Alcibiades proclaims, consists in his superhuman moderation (*sophrosyne*), or in his immunity to the attractions of physical beauty and common pleasures. While the philosopher appears to men to be erotically inclined towards beautiful young men and to be "stricken wild" by the charm of their beauty[13], this public posture, the philerast contends, is actually an intentional strategy of deception on the part of this silenic being: Socrates' intemperate, all-too-human response to physical beauty is in reality a feigned reaction, an ironic attempt to conceal his indifference to such things from public view and to cultivate an appearance of his natural humanity. When opened up for inspection, Alcibiades reports, Socrates displays an almost unnatural lack of care or concern for those things which incite passionate *eros* in most human beings, and for the sake of which men expend the greater part of their acquisitive energy. Beneath his guise of conformity to the tastes and judgements of others, the true Socrates considers physical beauty, wealth, and honour, those things esteemed by the multitude (*plethous*), to be worthless for a human being, and he has the most profound disdain for men who dedicate their lives to the pursuit of such ignoble goods.

Moderation, we learn in the *Republic*, is a virtue of the soul (or the city) which is not confined to a single part, to either the rational or spirited or appetitive faculties, but which extends throughout the whole, consisting in a music-like accord or harmony amongst the parts. In being moderate, a man becomes "stronger than himself": reason, his smaller and better part, allies with spiritedness or will power to enforce an iron discipline upon his inferior multitude (*plethous*) of desires and appetites. Moderation thus represents a form of martial rule in the soul, as the war between prudence (which counsels restraint) and desire (which craves umlimited gratification) is resolved in favour of the former in its alliance with the armed force of the will.[44]

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[13] For examples of this reaction, see *Charmides*,155d, and *Erastai*,133a. Yet, in feigning this homosexual *eros*, Socrates in fact accommodates his behaviour to the taste of the few rather than the many (i.e., he feigns conformity to the taste of men like those present at this symposium, perhaps in order that he might receive invitations to parties like this).

Yet, as we also learn from that dialogue, the idea of moderation may be divided into at least three, and perhaps four, related kinds. First, there is a type of moderation which is imposed upon the soul from without. In this case, an external restraint or policing of the desires must supplement inner resources when a soul, owing either to the immaturity of its reason or a weakness of its will, proves incapable of ruling itself. Young children, in whom prudence remains undeveloped, are particularly in need of such external moderating influences, relying upon the judgement and compulsion of adults (usually, but not always, their parents) to restrain or tame their appetites. When reason is unable to persuade the will to make war upon the desires, when (due to its virtual absence or underdevelopment) it cannot shame the spirit into a wholesome alliance against the bestial element of the soul, this mastery over the appetites must be supplied by some soul which is capable of ruling itself and others, and which recognizes moderation to be a source of psychic strength and harmony.

Secondly, there is a form of moderation which consists in self-rule or self-mastery, and which accordingly may be seen as the end or goal towards which the external policing of desires aims. This virtue of the soul, characteristic of human beings in whom prudence has reached a sufficient level of maturity to recognize the goodness of temperance, may be understood as the primary meaning of ***sophrosyne***, "sensibleness" or "sound-mindedness". In the soul which enjoys such sovereignty, reason rules tyrannically over the voracious appetites, shaming the spirit into serving as its auxiliary, and thereby keeping a man from performing unjust and ignoble acts in pursuit of sensual gratification. The man who is moderate in this sense, who practices a voluntary self-denial, remains free from enslavement to his baser longings, and has no need of external assistance in tuning the lyre of his soul. The truly moderate man is both musician and instrument, providing his own psychic harmony and acting as a self-sufficient guardian of his freedom.

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[44] *Republic*, 430e-432a.

Thirdly, however, there is a kind of moderation which is perhaps more aptly characterized as a continence of both body and soul, a condition of temperance which results from the waning of erotic energy. Such moderation entails little or no forceful restraint of passions and desires, insofar as the object of that restraint remains in such a weakened condition that it cannot challenge the authority of reason over the soul. As a normal accompaniment of satiety, old age, or physical disease, this form of continence or natural moderation is less a noble strength than a debilitating weakness of soul, less a virtue than a manifestation of bodily infirmity or psychic entropy. The continent man is moderate and just not primarily because he recognizes the merits of these virtues and aspires to achieve them, but because he lacks the *eros* which would propel his soul towards immoderate and unjust pursuits.

But beyond this weak and apathetic state of soul we may discern yet a fourth kind of moderation, a distinctly Socratic continence which is exemplified in the soul of the genuine lover of wisdom, and which (ironically) results from his intense eroticism and his hubristic aspirations. This philosophic brand of continence is more a matter of appearance than reality: while it manifests itself as an indifference towards those pleasures which preoccupy most human beings, this moderate condition does not result from a weakness or absence of *eros*, but rather is caused by the sublimation of the soul's erotic energy into the pursuit of knowledge or an apprehension of divine Beauty itself. In this case, the unrestrained love of wisdom simply drowns out all lesser loves, imparting an erotic unity or harmony to the philosophic soul. Socratic moderation is thus a voluntary denial of sensual gratification that flows from the immoderate, selfish, and hubristic love of wisdom. As the philosopher pursues erotic fulfillment through intercourse with beautiful souls, ascending the ladder of beauty toward the beauty of being, he comes to recognize as ugly and repulsive those things called beautiful by men who are familiar with only the lower rungs, and to consider the pursuit of such things a petty and ignoble enterprise (210c,211d). As Alcibiades himself observes in describing Socrates' moderation, the philosopher is not only indifferent to those things deemed blessings by the multitude (i.e.,by the *plethous* either in the city or the soul), but he holds these objects of popular desire, and the men who succumb to them, in great and incredible contempt (216e). Socratic moderation is thus an ironic by-product of immoderate, hubristic striving -- the philosopher would appear to harmonize opposite tendencies and countervailing drives within his soul. Hence, while Alcibiades confidently declares that he has seen through Socrates' erotic disguise to the reality of his moderation, in fact he may only have penetrated one layer of appearance and discovered yet another. For as we learn from Diotima, the philosopher is in reality a supreme eroticist, striving for a divine wisdom and immortality which makes him continent with respect to the goods that incite *eros* in most human beings.

However, the young Alcibiades was not concerned to arrive at a profound understanding of Socrates -- he merely wanted to use the philosopher in service to his own ambitious ends. Alcibiades saw in Socrates what he wanted to see; what his own *eros*, his love of honour and power, inclined him to see. As Alcibiades remarks with great wonder and fascination, Socrates' moderate indifference to physical beauty, wealth, and honour manifested itself in an anti-democratic disdain for the multitude. Moreover, his immunity to things called beautiful and good by the many freed him from enslavement to popular tastes and prejudices, endowing him with a solitary independence and a charismatic power that enabled him to command the wills of all men (216e). Although Socrates was a persuasive speaker, and could easily have gratified any desire for sex or money that he might have harboured in his soul (cf.182b), nevertheless he refused to pursue this erotic satisfaction longed for by most men, and this indifference (misinterpreted as restraint) served as a further source of strength for the man. The philosopher appeared to be perfectly self-sufficient, free from dependency upon the city and hence from the need to please any man but himself. Socrates, Alcibiades supposed, must have known something which caused him to disregard the pursuit of pleasure and honour, and which was thus the source of his superior independence and strength.[15] The philosopher thus became a mystery and enigma for Alcibiades, the unriddling of which might afford him the means to establishing an unconquerable tyranny in Athens, and perhaps even beyond the city walls. As the philerast confesses to this elite jury assembled at the home of Agathon, his recognition of Socrates' haughty indifference to popular praise represented a godsend (*hermaion*) and an amazing piece of good luck (*eutuchema*), as he now had the opportunity to be apprised of the philosopher's secret wisdom by gratifying him (217a;cf.184c-e). Once again, notice, it was not the love of virtue or a desire to know what is good for a human being that impelled Alcibiades towards Socrates. Rather, it was his will to power and glory, his longing for that which he confidently held to be his good, which prompted him to halt before the philosopher and to bow to his commands.[16]

Alcibiades now offers his jury a testimonial to the philosopher's superior moderation and his hubristic disdain for physical beauty, recalling that embarassing occasion when Socrates spurned his sexual overtures. Believing that Socrates was in earnest when he praised his beauty, Alcibiades was convinced that he might be initiated into the philosopher's mysteries if he gratified his desires. Taking an amazing amount of pride in his youthful beauty, Alcibiades supposed that even the continent Socrates would be unable to resist its charms (217a). The philerast thus set out to seduce the philosopher, apparently believing (as does Agathon in this dialogue;cf.175c) that through intercourse with Socrates' body he might have intercourse with his soul and be filled with its wisdom.[17] Alcibiades resolved to play Midas to Socrates' Silenus, attempting to capture this enigmatic being and to be made aware of its secrets.

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[15] This may be where the young Alcibiades made his greatest error in his assessment of Socrates. For as we learn from Diotima's taxonomy of lovers, the issue of erotic orientation is not so much a question of *knowledge* as it is one of *nature*.

[16] See Nietzsche's assessment of the "saint's" attraction for high-spirited men, *Beyond Good and Evil*,Aph.51.

[17] While this feat is, metaphysically speaking, strictly impossible, the success of "sexual espionage" throughout human history suggests that it is not as improbable as it sounds. Through seduction of the body, one can have intercourse with the soul, exploiting the fondness and intimacy which ordinarily prevail between lover and beloved.

The attempted seduction of Socrates took place in four stages, with each stage revealing an intensification of Alcibiades' *eros* and curiousity. First, while he was in the habit of consorting with Socrates only in the presence of a third party, Alcibiades decided to dispatch his attendant and to be alone with the philosopher, hoping that intimacy would cause Socates to converse with him freely just as a lover does with his beloved.[88] But these hopes were dashed: despite this opportune privacy, Socrates did not deviate from his habitual manner, but took his leave from Alcibiades after having spent the day in conversation. Persistent in erotic matters, Alcibiades next challenged Socrates to join him in stripping and wrestling, presumably calculating that no human being could be immune to the beauty of his physical form. But the supremely moderate Socrates was unlike any human being, and the philerast gained no advantage from this seductive ploy. Frustrated by Socrates's self-control, and his appetite whetted even more by the satyr's apparent immunity to *eros*, Alcibiades resolved to adopt a more barbarous strategy: if gentle persuasion and enticement would not work on the philosopher, then he must be set upon by force -- the body and soul of Socrates must be raped, and compelled to reveal its secrets.[89] An experienced seducer, Alcibiades set in motion a plot which would ensure uninterrupted privacy with the hard-to-get Socrates, inviting the philosopher to dinner at his home.[90] On the first occasion that Socrates attended, Alcibiades' shame restrained his forceful passion, and he allowed the philosopher to depart once he had dined. Yet the inhibiting force of shame exerted only a temporary influence upon Alcibiades-- he recaptured his former boldness and renewed his plottings once again. The fourth and final attempt at seduction yielded more promising results, as the philerast managed to keep Socrates in conversation late into the evening, and persuaded him to spend the night in a private room with no one else present. At last, Alcibiades was on the verge of realizing his erotic aspirations.[91]

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[88] Why did Alcibiades feel compelled to have a chaperone present when he met with Socrates? Was it a concern for public image and propriety (in which case it would appear that association with Socrates was circumspect in Athens)? Or was it (as is generally the case with chaperones) that Alcibiades feared Socrates, sensing that there was some powerful passion concealed beneath his miserable exterior?

[89] It is a most curious feature of this entire seduction--indeed, of this entire speech--that Alcibiades never once hit upon the notion that Socrates might be a confirmed heterosexual, and that his resistance might reflect an immunity to homosexual love rather than to sexual love simply. We must remember that while all previous speakers had praised the superiority of pederastic love, Socrates claimed to have learned about *erotika* from a *woman*, and we are compelled to wonder whether everything she had to teach was conveyed by means of speech alone. That is, just as Alcibiades appeared to have ulterior motives for consorting with Socrates, could it be that the young Socrates' desire to be with Diotima represented more than a pure love of wisdom?

[90] Curiously, this is precisely what Agathon does in the *Symposium*. Is the tragic poet driven by similar erotic urges? We should note that Alcibiades ends his eulogy by warning the beautiful poet about the dangers of consorting with Socrates (222b).

When he was alone in the dark with Socrates, Alcibiades recalls, he freely voiced his opinion that it would be foolhardy for him to withhold from the philosopher either his body, his wealth, or his influential friends. Thus, by offering to pay Socrates for his wisdom, Alcibiades in effect treated the philosopher like an ordinary sophist. Did he not yet know the difference? Professing a noble desire to become the "best possible", and praising the philosopher as the most competent assistant in this quest for self-perfection (cf.212b), Alcibiades confessed that he would be far more ashamed before prudent men if he failed to gratify a man like Socrates than he would be before the many for gratifying him. As a mark of his natural nobility, Alcibiades revealed his disdain for the inferior multitude in the city, proclaiming his willingness to forego popular praise and honour in order to receive the esteem of the few (cf.194b-c).

Socrates' reply to this erotic advance, Alcibiades warns his audience, was delivered with his customary irony (218d). And admittedly it is devilishly difficult to uncover precisely what the philosopher meant to say to this young man. First, Socrates praised Alcibiades for his recognition of a beauty in the soul through which he might become "better" (or "stronger", or "braver";*ameinon*): this young man had realized that beauty is not restricted to the body or the perceptible realm. Secondly, however, Socrates charged Alcibiades with deceitfulness, alleging that his purpose in consorting with a philosopher was unjust. Like the Trojan Diomedes in Homer's *Iliad*, who traded his bronze armour for the precious gold mail of an Achaian in a friendly exchange on the battlefield, Alcibiades was attempting to deceive the philosopher, to acquire something of great value in exchange for something which is in truth worthless.[92] Alcibiades, Socrates implied, was attempting to acquire knowledge about beauty and the power which accrues to one who has such an understanding without undertaking the great labour required in the pursuit of such knowledge: Alcibiades was trying to acquire wisdom without philosophizing. Finally, Socrates suggested to Alcibiades that his pursuit of political power through association with a philosopher might well be a misguided enterprise, proclaiming that his soul may in reality be nothing (*ouden*). True to his silenic form, Socrates dissuaded Alcibiades from his shameful and unjust quest by suggesting that at bottom the soul of the philosopher may remain insubstantial and formless, and hence that this young man may not find gratification for his *eros* through intercourse with a lover of wisdom. In believing that a philosopher could (or would) assist him in realizing his political ambitions, Alcibiades revealed the immaturity of his reason -- Alcibiades' beautiful body may have been in its prime, but his soul remained youthful and lacking in good form (218e-219a).

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[91] That Socrates played hard-to-get with such facility and effectiveness should perhaps give us cause to wonder who in reality was the pursuer and who the pursued. Recall that Diotima had described to Socrates a god of Love who has great skill in weaving devices to trap the beautiful (203d).

Alcibiades appeared not to understand Socrates' ironic reply (and after all, who could blame him). In response, he merely reiterated his desire for intimacy, and placed himself under the prudent command of the philosopher (219a). Socrates accepted this offer of an alliance, declaring that they would continue in the future to be friends and to pursue that course of action which looked best upon deliberation. Alcibiades, however, took this concession to mean that Socrates had in fact been wounded by his arrows of love; that his prey had been captured. Emboldened by this apparent victory, the philerast reclined beside the naked philosopher and embraced him, only to be subjected to a most hubristic insult: Socrates laughed at this young man's exceptional beauty, scorning that one quality which Alcibiades considered his most prized possession and his greatest political advantage. Why, we must ask, would Socrates treat this man in such a hubristic fashion? Why would he subject Alcibiades to this indignity after having taken the youth under his wing, professing his friendship and his concern to ensure the young man's future good?

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[92] Homer, *Iliad*,vi.119-236. However, we should note that the exchange was not so clearly to the advantage of the Trojan: tough bronze armour may be a much more valuable possession on life's numerous battlefields than armour of soft gold. Did Alcibiades have something of comparable 'protective' value to offer to the philosopher? (See 218d with 219d: Whereas Alcibiades offered Socrates sex, wealth, and friends, he later realized that the philosopher was immune to sexual love and money -- the matter of friends remains conspicious by its absence.

Alcibiades' account of his reaction to this insult perhaps provides us with one explanation and justification for Socrates' curious behaviour. For while he admits that he felt himself greatly dishonoured by Socrates' arrogant rejection of his love, Alcibiades nevertheless confesses that he continued to long for the philosopher's company. Alcibiades actually emerged from this painful assault on his pride with an intensified admiration and wonder for Socrates' superior moderation, courage, and nature. He now knew well that Socrates was no sophist; that the philosopher was as immune to the attractions of wealth as Ajax was to iron. No longer did Alcibiades look upon Socrates as a means to realizing his tyrannical aspirations, but he nevertheless continued to be captivated by the philosopher's superior example of manliness (*andreian*;219d).

Hence, Alcibiades' soul was humbled by this incident. Prior to that night with Socrates, the philerast was vain, opinionated, pompous and pretentious-- a thoroughly uneducable young man. He was confident that the great physical beauty endowed to him by nature could charm any human being into compliance with his will, and he longed to acquire knowledge of the soul and a capacity for clever speaking solely as a means to establishing tyrannical control over men. But all of this appeared to change as a consequence of the philosopher's hubristic rebuke of his physical beauty. His arrogance crushed by Socrates' arrogance, Alcibiades sensed that he had encountered a human being who was immune to his beauty and charm; a man who apparently embraced a standard of beauty that made physical attractiveness look ugly by comparison. The cocksure and confident Alcibiades thus fell victim to radical self-doubt, sensing that his own beauty was not after all the most splendid in the world; that there existed a still greater form of beauty to which the philosopher's *eros* aspired, and hence that the political tyranny he longed to establish did not represent the most beautiful or noble end for a human being. As the philerast admits, following this incident his soul was in a quandary, and he wandered about aimless, confused, and distracted. The example of Socrates caused Alcibiades' reason to doubt that the object of his own powerful longings was indeed the greatest good for a human being, and accordingly his soul lacked direction (219e;cf.173a). Alcibiades' soul was rendered chaotic and formless as a consequence of Socrates' hubris, and it was in dire need of order and guidance.

Upon reflection, then, the humiliation of Alcibiades emerges as part of a revolutionary pedagogic strategy, the first step in the re*form*ation of this young man's soul. Through this attack upon his vanity the philerast was rendered considerably more pliant and educable. His confidence that he *knew* what was beautiful and good for a human being was shaken by Socrates' reproach, and his own potent *eros*, his own love of beauty, now longed for a new object towards which it might direct its acquisitive energy. Through his hubris, Socrates accomplished a most astonishing feat: he controlled the previously uncontrollable Alcibiades, reducing his soul to a condition of stunning ignorance and thereby preparing it for an education in virtue. As a result of the philosopher's arrogant deed, the form imparted to Alcibiades' soul by his tyrannical *eros* was destroyed, yet this act of destruction cleared the way for the creation of a new form, a new soul. Alcibiades became a primordial chaos of erotic energy that could be reshaped or reformed by sublimating his love of beauty towards the pursuit of nobility and human excellence. The remainder of Alcibiades' eulogy is an account of this reformatory education in virtue, a testimonial to the philosopher's own creative *eros*.

4.4 Socratic Power: Independence and Strength

Some time after this painful incident, Alcibiades recalls, he accompanied Socrates on the military campaign to Potidaea, where they shared a tent together.[93] There, he claims, he beheld Socrates acting in a manner superior to all the other soldiers, including himself (219e). Removed from the peaceful conditions of the *polis*, and placed in a violent milieu wherein men prove their worth through acts of heroism and self-sacrifice, the philerast was able to *see* Socrates more clearly, beholding the philosopher's soul stripped of its silenic cloak of irony and deception.

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[93] Ca. 432 B.C. It is curious that the two military expeditions recounted by Alcibiades were less than major successes for Athens. The expedition to Potidaea to suppress a colonial revolt was an inconclusive victory (Potidaea was lost to the Chalcidians in 404 B.C.), and the campaign to Delium led to a decisive defeat for Athens (see Thucydides, I.56-65,IV.89-101). Indeed, the banquet depicted in the *Symposium* takes place on the eve of another costly Athenian military defeat: the Sicilian expedition, in which Alcibiades played a major part, although largely through his absence (Thucydides, VI.8-32,VII.72-87). One should consult Thucydides on the apparent cause of the Sicilian expedition, and on the passion that Alcibiades stirred up in the *demos* when advocating its launching (VI.24).

Hence, the education that Alcibiades received from the philosopher was one which took place in war, an environment which is apt to make or break the soul of any man. Through the example of his own martial virtue, Socrates succeded in hardening Alcibiades' soul and releasing it from enslavement to its fears (221a-b). The philosopher became for Alcibiades a model of nobility and human excellence: he proved himself a valiant and prudent warrior, a "real man" (*andros*;221b) whose virtues were worthy of admiration and imitation by men who long for the beautiful and the good. In war, Alcibiades found himself; he discovered that strong condition of the soul which alone represents genuine beauty and health for a human being, and he resolved to devote his *eros*, his energy, towards achieving that noble end.

In this penultimate section of his eulogy, then, Alcibiades departs from the speeches of Socrates and undertakes to praise the philosopher's deeds, specifically his acts of strength and daring (220b). This shift in emphasis is significant, both in what it reveals about Socrates and about the teaching of virtue. For in this account of the philosopher's performance in war we learn that Socrates practices what he preaches. The philosopher's *logos* about the virtues of men is not hollow rhetoric, not the words of a self-serving sophist, for his own deeds exemplify those qualities of soul that he praises in speech. Despite the philosopher's "silenic guise", in the final analysis there is a perfect congruence between his speeches and his soul: the "inside" of Socrates' strange *logos* matches the "inside" of the strange man, each possessing an internal coherence, and each displaying the requirements of human nobility or gentlemanliness (221d,222a).

Moreover, that it was this glimpse at the philosopher's warlike soul which succeeded in reforming Alcibiades suggests that something more than mere speeches about virtue are required to tame and educate high-spirited, philerastic men. As the comic poet expressly claimed in his eulogy, manly men, intense lovers of honour and victory, are exceedingly hubristic, disdaining the affections of all whom they consider their inferiors. Such proud men embrace high standards of excellence, and are reluctant to grant equality, much less superiority, to any man. The philerast's outlook on life is eristic or agonistic, and every man is seen as a rival in the contest for glory and power. Consequently, one who strives to educate such highly erotic souls, to redirect their *eros* towards the pursuit of a noble form of glory and power, must first acquire their respect, something they but grudgingly grant. One must demonstrate one's superiority on *their* terms, proving one's courage or manliness(*andreian*) and therewith one's worth as a teacher or mentor. Indeed, the first thing that Alcibiades remarks upon in this praise of Socrates in war is how the philosopher faced hardship better than anyone else on the battlefield: Socrates acquired the esteem and admiration of this philerast by displaying his superior strength and endurance among high spirited warriors. Alcibiades thus divined that the beauty or nobility towards which Socrates' philosophic *eros* aspired did not render this man weak and effeminate, but rather it inspired within him the power to distinguish himself as a real man.[94] Given Alcibiades' evident appreciation and understanding of the powers of rhetoric, one suspects that the praise of such beauty alone would have been insufficient to inspire within him the desire to achieve this condition. He had to be shown, through the deeds of that very human being who paid tribute to virtue in speech, that this noble pursuit was in fact a source of independence and strength for a man. Thus, it would appear that the teaching of virtue is always an *ad hominem* enterprise: the teacher's personal example, his own character and practices, serves as a litmus test for the way of life he advocates in speech; as a living testimony both to the seriousness with which he regards his own teaching, and to the contribution it makes to the good of a human being.

Alcibiades' praise of Socrates' behaviour in war consists in a catalogue of seven

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[94] That this section of the eulogy is in fact an account of the curriculum of Alcibiades' education is perhaps substantiated by Socrates in Book VII of the *Republic*. There, as he introduces Glaucon to a rigorous pre-philosophic curriculum, he stresses that the subjects must not be useless in matters of war (521d).

"amazing" or "wondrous" deeds that attest to his unique strength.[95] The first four of these deeds bear witness to the philosopher's moderation or self-control, his indifference to bodily pleasures and his endurance of pain or hardship. Socrates, we learn, was able to go for long periods without food and to resist the intoxicating effects of wine. Moreover, whereas other men required warmth to remain alive and sleep to rejuvenate their powers, the philosopher could walk barefoot in the fiercest winters, and could remain awake for an entire day and night in contemplation. Hence, while most human beings must cater to the common needs of their bodies in the interests of health, Socrates' continence liberated him from this enslavement to the body: his minimal physical needs and his disregard of the body's weaknesses endowed him with the independence required to tend to the needs of his soul. The philosopher, Alcibiades suggests with his examples, appeared not to have any body at all, to be a disembodied soul.

Yet each of these examples of Socrates' strength or self-control is unique, elucidating a different facet of the philosopher's independence. First, we are told, when the army was cut off from its supply line and forced to go without food, Socrates dominated all others in his capacity to endure starvation. While such an unfortunate occurence tends to weaken men's bodies and to demoralize their spirits, Socrates' soul ruled tyrannically over his body, refusing to succumb to the distress which typically attends a lack of adequate nourishment. Beyond this, however, the example further reveals to us the manner in which the philosopher comported himself towards *chance* or *fortune* in human life. For the incident that Alcibiades recounts was a matter of bad luck, one of the misfortunes of war. But whereas all the others were devastated by this misfortune (indeed, one suspects that they were inclined to blame their bad luck on the gods, and to make prayers and supplications[96]), Socrates accepted this turn of fate without flinching. The philosopher was courageous and resolute before fortune, remaining cheerful when others became miserable, and retaining his strength of will while others became dispirited. The soul of this warlike human being was immune to the vicissitudes of chance, and therefore free from the anxiety they normally arouse in men. In this respect he proved his 'musical' superiority to the greater part of mankind.[97]

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[95] The density of references to "strength" (*kratos*; 219d,220a1,6,220c) and "amazing" (*thaumastos*;220a4,8,220b, 220c,221c) in this brief account suggests that what was most wondrous for Alcibiades was the philosopher's strength of will or his spiritedness.

[96] Cf. *Republic*,364b,383b.

Secondly, we learn that at festivities, Socrates alone was able to take pleasure in other things beside drink. The philosopher had no desire to indulge in wine, but even when he was compelled to do so by others he never succumbed to drunkenness: Socrates was (and still is;cf.214a) a model of Apollinian sobriety, remaining immune to that condition of intoxication which weakens and disorients other men's bodies and souls. But Alcibiades implies through his testimony that Socrates was not simply unerotic or indifferent to all pleasures, but that the philosopher's immunity to or lack of care for physical pleasure was a product of his quest for psychic gratification, his pursuit of those things which please and nourish the soul. [98] Moreover, as a consequence of pursuing these pleasures, the philosopher was rendered indifferent to the compulsion of other men: even if he was compelled by fellow symposiasts to drink against his will, his soul nevertheless remained unaffected by this 'tyrannical' assault upon his body.

In beholding Socrates' demeanor and behaviour at symposia, then, Alcibiades learned much about the philosopher's capacity to survive and remain independent even in the most restrictive political circumstances. For like this present symposium at the home of Agathon, the banquet that Alcibiades recalls serves as an image of the political association, and reveals how the philosopher comported himself towards men in the city. Socrates indeed accommodated himself to the will of the majority by following its command that all men should drink; but even as his body submitted to this political rule his soul remained free to pursue its cherished goods. By disregarding the body, by refusing to allow physical concerns to dominate his passions, the philosopher was liberated from political control: other men might rule his body and make it conform to their coercive dictates, but they could not rule his soul, or deter him from pursuing those things which truly gratified his *eros*. The beauty to which the philosopher's *eros* aspires--according to Diotima an immaterial form of beauty which transcends political affairs--is not dependent upon the body or the city, and therefore does not require that his soul be subject to those forces which constrain his physical being. By virtue of his sublimated *eros* and his superhuman continence, Socrates is a consummate 'chameleon', able to adapt to any political setting without sacrificing his erotic quest for fulfillment. [9]

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[97] Cf.203d, and Diotima's account of the toughness of Eros. Consider also *Republic*, 399a-b, and Socrates' account of the musical education of the guardian class: "Just leave that mode which would appropriately imitate the sounds and accents of a man who is courageous in warlike deeds and every violent work, and who in failure or when going to face wounds or death or falling into some other disaster, in the face of all these things stands up firmly and patiently against chance."

[98] Judging from Socrates' voluntary attendence at this present symposium, and his behaviour during the proceedings, we may conclude that such psychic pleasure derives from speech, and especially from speech with beautiful human beings (cf.194d). The philosopher is drawn to those banquets where he can find a healthy feast of soul food.

Thirdly, Alcibiades recalls Socrates' immunity to natural elements, his capacity to endure extreme cold without even the protection of clothing. In the terrible winters of northern Hellas most men sought refuge indoors, and if they did venture out into the snow they wrapped their bodies in an amazing number of garments and covered their feet with sheepskins. But Socrates appeared to have no such aversion to the frigid climate, marching barefoot through the ice wearing only his summer mantle. Thus, in addition to his independence from fortune and the compulsion of men, the philosopher's self-control rendered him strong and resolute before the harsh and potentially destructive power of nature herself. Whereas most men, owing to the weakness of their bodies and spirits, permit nature to restrict their motions and to make their souls miserable, Socrates refuses to allow external or bodily conditions to affect the state of his soul, standing up defiantly before the forces of nature and moving about just as freely in harsh weather as he does in temperate conditions. Yet, as Alcibiades reveals here, it is precisely this defiant posture which causes the philosopher to appear hubristic to lesser men, and which elicits their resentment: as Socrates marched barefoot through the ice, the other soldiers looked askance at him as if he were despising them (220b). The natural condition of the philosopher's soul, his comparative immunity to physical pains and pleasures and his practical indifference to both his natural and political environments, endows him with superior strength and freedom. But in this condition he serves as a constant and painful reminder to lesser men of their weakness and their enslavement to the body: compared with Socrates, every man's soul appears to be a "ninety-eight pound weakling". Alcibiades was thus alone in his admiration for the philosopher's strength and self-control, as the other men present considered Socrates' noble endurance an implicit insult to their physical limitations -- where Alcibiades beheld nobility and excellence, the many saw only arrogance and disdain. From this incident, then, Alcibiades learned that the great man, the man who towers above all others with his superior strength and endurance, frequently incurs the envy of small-souled men, reaping their blame and resentment rather than their praise.

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[9] Cf.176c: "And I leave Socrates out of account; as he can go either way, he will be content with whatever we do." Curiously, something similar was later said by Thucydides (and Plutarch) about Alcibiades himself, remarking upon this man's remarkable capacity to adapt to any political setting, even the harsh Spartan way of life, with ease (Thucydides,vi.88-93; Plutarch, "Life of Alcibiades",op.cit.,p.249).

However, the fourth act of endurance performed by this enigmatic Odysseus serves to qualify this account of the philosopher's hubris. [100] Once when Socrates was possessed by a thought, Alcibiades recalls, he stood on the same spot from dawn to dawn in contemplation, refusing to yield to the normal human need for sleep (222c). [101] While the answer to the question troubling him was elusive and difficult to track down, Socrates nevertheless persevered in his hunt for the truth: as a manifestation of the highest kind of hubris, the philosopher refused to rest content with his ignorance, but diligently pursued a form of knowledge which was not readily accessible to the mind of man (cf.210a-212a).

Yet here Alcibiades adds two significant points about this incident. First, by standing motionless and resisting the impulse to sleep, Socrates became a wondrous spectacle for other men to behold. Specifically, some Ionians who were present on the campaign decided to sleep on the ground in the cold night air in order to see if the philosopher would remain in contemplation throughout the night. That is, through his personal example of superior manliness and endurance, Socrates inspired lesser men to endure physical hardship and to perform similar acts of strength: although Ionians were known throughout Hellas for their softness and lack of manliness[102], the spectacle of Socrates compelled them to undertake labours which would toughen their own bodies and souls, or which would free them from enslavement to their physical weaknesses. Unlike the Athenian soldiers who envied and resented Socrates for his superhuman endurance, the Ionians were awed by the philosopher's strength, and were accordingly persuaded to imitate it. From this curious incident, then, Alcibiades learned that a living example of nobility can have an ennobling or uplifting effect upon those whom it charms and captivates; that the noble man enjoys great power over his inferiors, insofar as they strive to follow him and to imitate his example.

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[100] Alcibiades here likens Socrates to the wily Odysseus with a quotation from Homer's *Odyssey* (242,271). "What sort of thing the strong man did and dared." This line appears twice in the *Odyssey*, the first referring to Odysseus' own deceitfulness as a spy, the second to his endurance before the guile and deception of a woman.

[101] Cf.174d,175b.

Secondly, Alcibiades recounts how this amazing feat came to an end: the following morning, Socrates made a prayer to the rising sun and went about his daily business. The hubristic philosopher, who is defiant before certain forces of his own nature, nevertheless displays a piety or humility before the highest things, those things which stubbornly resist human comprehension. Ultimately there is a genuine reverence which inheres in the philosophic soul, as the lover of wisdom recognizes the the divine things do not have free and uninterrupted intercourse with human beings, or that the pursuit of knowledge may well represent the most sublime case of unrequited love. We must always remember that after a lifetime of unceasing labour in pursuit of the truth, Socrates maintained that he knew only that he knew nothing. Indeed, it may perhaps be the greatest testimony to the will of the philosopher that he has the strength to endure this quest, to accept his perpetual ignorance despite devoting his entire wealth of erotic energy towards overcoming this condition. That is, perhaps the most "amazing" thing about this fourth labour performed by Socrates is that he persevered in his search for an answer despite the fact that he apparently "made no progress" (220c).[103]

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[102] See,for example *Republic*, 398e; Herodotus, i.143,v.69; Thucydides, v.9,vi.77,viii.25.

[103] We should note that of the four deeds of endurance recounted by Alcibiades, the *Symposium* offers explicit corroboration only for three: Socrates arrives late for dinner, thereby manifesting an indifference to bodily nourishment (175c); both

Of the three remaining deeds recounted by Alcibiades, two attest to the character of Socrates' courage in battle, while the central feat evinces his immunity to the love of honour. Once when Alcibiades fell wounded on the battlefield, Socrates braved considerable personal danger to save both him and his weapons: the philosopher proved both his courage and his *love* for Alcibiades, refusing to abandon the young man in the heat of battle, or even to allow him to suffer the great shame of losing his personal armour (cf.179a). In recognition of his bravery, Alcibiades petitioned the generals to award Socrates the "prize of excellence" (*taristeia*), a token of valour which the Athenian commanders wished to bestow upon Alcibiades himself on account of his superior rank. Yet despite being most deserving of the award, the philosopher proved more eager than the generals that Alcibiades be its recipient rather than himself. Alcibiades thus received a token of popular or political honour that he himself admits was justly Socrates' due.

On the surface, this recollection of Socrates' strange behaviour reveals much about the character of the philosopher's courage and nobility. For most men are in need of honour and public recognition to inspire them to behave in a noble and courageous fashion, to risk wounds and perhaps death in defence of their city and its goods. *Eros*, that longing of the soul to *be* forever, to participate in the eternal, causes a man to fear and avoid situations that threaten to end his being in the world. An excessive love of life makes a man timorous and reluctant to perform deeds which are crucial to the survival of the city. But what distinguishes high-spirited, war-loving men like Alcibiades is that they love honour more than mere life, seeing the acquisition of fame or glory as a means of transcending the temporal limitations of

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[103](cont'd) Eryximachus and Alcibiades remark upon Socrates' immunity to drunkenness (176c,214a), and we hear that at the conclusion of the party the philosopher apparently drank both Agathon and Aristophanes under the table (223c); and we hear that Socrates not only refused to yield to the need for sleep when the other symposiasts did, but that he actually remained awake for another full day before taking his rest at home (223c-d).This independent evidence would thus appear to attest to Alcibiades' veracity as a witness. Moreover, it further serves to highlight the third labour, Socrates' immunity to the cold. While I remain mystified as to the meaning of this asymmetry, one might consider Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, Preface, #3: "Philosophy, as I have so far understood it, means living voluntarily among ice and high mountains -- seeking out everything strange and questionable in existence, everything so far placed under a ban by morality."

human being, of leaving a lasting imprint upon the world. Consequently the promise of political glory, of an enduring memory in the minds of fellow citizens, can effectively persuade such men to confront life-threatening situations and to strive for valorous distinction. Prizes for martial virtue or excellence enlist the love of honour in service to the common good of the political community, and are thus a necessary facet of political life. Unlike most men, however, Socrates's courage, his proven willingness to risk violent death, was not motivated by the love of honour: the philosopher refused to accept any political recognition of his valour, and in fact urged it upon a man who apparently was in need of such external inducement, or who could make better use of it. The philosopher is unique among men in performing courageous deeds without any desire for glorious recognition of his courage. Thus, what we learn from this incident -- or, more to the point, what Alcibiades learned from it -- is that Socrates' manliness was supported by an intense love of human nobility or beauty, by a concern to *be* a natural gentleman regardless of what he *seemed* to others to be. The philosopher is unconcerned with obtaining popular praise for his noble acts, and instead performs these deeds out of a desire to be noble or virtuous, considering the attainment of this robust condition of soul to be a sufficient reward in itself. Socrates, Alcibiades learned, embraces a standard of beauty which causes him to be the most manly of men, and which liberates him from enslavement to the accolades of the many -- Socrates is a strong and independent gentleman.

Finally, Alcibiades praises the philosopher's courageous behaviour when the Athenian army was routed at Delium. Whereas Socrates, whose previous heroism had gone unrecognized by the Athenians, was but a hoplite or foot soldier, Alcibiades, we learn, had by then advanced to the rank of knight, riding on horseback and commanding troops (221a).[104] Since he was at this time a mature warrior hardened against the fears of battle, and since he was then in a superior condition of *health*, Alcibiades testifies that he was in a position to behold Socrates acting in even a "finer" (or "more noble"; *kallion*) way than in previous battles.

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[104] Since the horse figures prominently in the dialogues of Plato as an image of the city (see, for instance, *Apology*,30e), Alcibiades' claim that he was by now on horseback, riding the horse and having it serve his good, acquires a greater significance.

Coming by chance upon Socrates and his companion Laches while the army retreated, Alcibiaded remained by their side to ensure their safety, and was impressed by two properties of the philosopher's courage. First, Socrates displayed remarkable prudence or "good sense"(*euphron*) in the midst of great chaos or disorder. And secondly, whereas the other men turned their backs upon the enemy and fled in haste, the philosopher defiantly faced front and retreated slowly, as if to announce his disdain for his attackers. Socrates' performance, Alcibiades declares, was in perfect character, revealing the accuracy of Aristophanes' depiction of the philosopher's hubristic demeanor in *The Clouds*: even as he faced great personal danger, Socrates "swaggered like a pelican, casting his eyes from side to side".[105] Retreating in this way, the philerast asserts, Socrates made it apparent to the enemy, even at a great distance, that he was a real man who had the resources to defend himself vigorously against the most violent attacks. Even in retreat the philosopher struck fear in the hearts of the advancing army, and consequently emerged unscathed from this disastrous defeat.

Perhaps the key to the significance of this vignette is Alcibiades' mention of Laches.[106] For the Platonic dialogue named after this man (who would later become an Athenian general) is devoted to the question of courage, and concludes with Socrates and his interlocuters in a state of loss or perplexity (*aporia*) regarding the nature of this virtue. At one point in the discussion, Laches defines the *idea* of courage as an endurance of the soul.[107] The philosopher, however, denies that this could be simply true: whereas courage is regarded as noble and beneficial, foolish endurance is shameful and harmful to a man. The definition of courage as endurance is thus rendered inadequate, and requires that a distinction be made between prudent and imprudent forms of endurance. Indeed, as Alcibiades remarks in this recollection, Socrates' courageous (not to mention hubristic) perseverence on the battlefield was coupled with superior prudence or good sense. Put otherwise, Socratic courage manifested itself as a noble marriage between moderation and spiritedness, or between complete self-control and a manly strength of will. Even as the philosopher revealed publicly his capacity for violence, ~~he~~ nonetheless remained a paragon of perfect self-mastery. Courage does not consist in an animal boldness, in a raw or unrestrained spiritedness, but rather requires an iron discipline in the soul directed by reason or prudence. The reformation of Alcibiades' soul in war was thus capped off with a lesson about courage and prudent self-control: the most courageous and manly men are not hotheads, fools, or beasts, but gentlemen who do not relax the rule of reason over their passions even in the most life-threatening circumstances. Only in this way does a real man remain immune to the fears which debilitate his inferiors, and thereby attain a condition of noble independence.

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[105] *The Clouds*, 1.362. The context of this line is revealing. It is spoken by the Clouds to Socrates, and it announces the grounds of their attraction to the man. These goddesses are not drawn to Socrates because of his superior wisdom and judgement, but because of his hubristic swagger and his barefooted endurance of many evils. Indeed, as Alcibiades reveals here, Socrates' hubris is praiseworthy and attractive for men like himself, announcing the man's superior confidence to the world.

[106] Cf. Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*,op.cit.,p.315.

[107] *Laches*,192c-d.

4.5 Socratic Music Revisited

In concluding his eulogy of Socrates, Alcibiades returns to the question of Socratic *logos*, declaring that the philosopher's speeches are as silenic as the man himself (221d-222a). Whereas the philosopher's words appear ridiculous and trivial to the many (and hence are susceptible to Aristophanic parody), the philerast asserts that the experienced and prudent man is nonetheless able to see in Socrates' speeches many "pleasing images of virtue" (*agalmata aretes*) which can lead him to a condition of nobility and goodness. Socratic music is like the very hide of a hubristic satyr, concealing a divine beauty beneath a mask of irony and deception.

Immediately, however, we must ask why this praise of Socratic *logos* is set apart from the initial account of the philosopher's speeches. Why did Alcibiades "neglect" (*parelipon*) to say these things at the outset? While it is tempting to attribute this apparent lack of unity in Alcibiades' encomium to his drunkenness (215a), the philosopher will momentarily give us cause to doubt the plausibility of this explanation by suggesting that the philerast is in reality sober, that he has merely feigned intoxication to license his frank disclosures and to hide the real purpose of his speaking (222c). Thus, a more plausible interpretation of Alcibiades' disjunctive praise of Socratic *logos*, one which remains consistent with the 'confessional' character of his entire eulogy, is that the Alcibiades who now applauds the intrinsic nobility of the philosopher's speech is not the same Alcibiades who spoke at the outset of his encomium. As we have seen, the initial praise of Socrates' powerful *logos* was delivered by a youthful Alcibiades driven by tyrannical urges; it was a praise of *sophistry* by a man who longed for unassailable political power, and who saw the philosopher's daemonic speech as a most effective instrument for controlling men's souls. Yet throughout this encomium, we witnessed the education of Alcibiades at the hands of Socrates. In the philosopher's hubristic treatment of this youth, and in the philerast's account of Socrates' amazing deeds in war, we beheld the reformation of Alcibiades' diseased soul, the redirecting of his *eros* away from the shameful desire for political tyranny and towards the noble desire for self-tyranny, for self-mastery and independence. The Alcibiades who now speaks of the philosopher's ennobling speech is thus a mature man inspired by the example of Socrates' own independence and strength; a man who now sees in Socrates' musical *logos* the principles which supported the philosopher's own superior manliness, and which have the power to make a human being stronger, more profound, and more beautiful. The changing structure and tenor of this eulogy thus "imagistically" represents the educational transformation of Alcibiades, the changes wrought in him as a consequence of his association with a philosopher. Alcibiades neglected at the outset to say these things about Socrates' speeches because they are things that he did not see, and did not care to see, as a young man; things which his youthful love of popular honour and political tyranny kept him from seeing. In the concluding section of his eulogy, then, Alcibiades reveals to his audience his mature understanding of Socrates, praising those noble dimensions of the philosopher's speech that he only came to recognize and love as a consequence of his educational odyssey.

Socrates' speeches, Alcibiades declares, are most like sileni when they are "opened up", revealing that in reality they are nothing like what they appear to be. Even those human beings who are willing to listen to the philosopher find his speeches altogether laughable at first: Socrates' words seem to be nothing but mindless inanities, constantly referring to pack-asses, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and tanners, and appearing always to say the same things through the same things.[108] But if one sees these speeches opened up and courageously wanders within, Alcibiades maintains, one will discover two extraordinary things about them. First, one finds that Socrates' speeches alone possess internal sense and coherence; that the philosopher's *logos* is unique in its avoidance of contradiction. And secondly, one sees that his speeches are "most divine" (*theiotatous*), possessing the largest number of images of virtue, and dealing with those questions the consideration of which is itself ennobling or beautifying.

Thus, Alcibiades contends, once a man sees beyond the laughable exterior of Socrates' speeches and takes them seriously, he can embark upon a journey which will lead him to divine beauty, and which accordingly promises the most pleasurable gratification for his *eros*. Through reflection upon Socrates' dialectical speech, one can penetrate the philosopher's shield of irony and wander about inside his soul, marveling at its many amazing images of virtue and coming to understand what is required in the soul of a natural gentleman, a man who is both noble and good. Whether Alcibiades recognizes it or not, the language he employs here is intensely erotic in character, and reveals just how far he has progressed from his youthful condition. For as a young man, the philerast thought it possible to gain access to Socrates' soul by having intercourse with his body--the young Alcibiades restricted erotic phenomena to matters of the body, and believed that all gratification for *eros* could be achieved by gratifying the sexual appetite (217a). Yet the mature Alcibiades, compelled by the example of Socrates to take seriously a form of beauty that transcends the body, now appreciates that *reason* is the erotic medium distinctive of man: whereas his body is incapable of penetrating Socrates' soul and sharing in its wisdom, this intercourse with the "inside" of the philosopher can be achieved by reflection upon that *logos* which mirrors his psychic condition.[109] Through the use of reason, a prudent *and* experienced man can gain access to the images of virtue that lie concealed both in Socrates' *logos* and in his soul, and thereby have intercourse with the forms of the virtues to which these images point. Socratic *logos*, a form of rational speech that appeals to and incites the human love of beauty, is the medium through which an intensely erotic man may "be together" with like-minded men as well as the divine things, cultivating within his soul the virtues appropriate to a noble man. Socrates, it seems, is a most capable servant of Eros: he channels the *eros* of young men into noble Uranian expressions, and acts as an instrument through which these erotic souls might find gratification for their noble longings.

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[108] The precise meaning of these examples escapes me. However, insofar as each is an artisan who deals with a specific *techne* or domain of technical knowledge, we may perhaps suppose that Socrates' discussion of these occupations represents a first step in considering the character of knowledge and knowing as such.

[109] I.e., the images of virtue which inhere in Socrates' silenic speech mirror the divine images that inhere in his silenic being (cf.215b,216e).

Alcibiades' strange eulogy of Socrates, his curious combination of praise and blame, thus ends on a note of sublime praise for the philosopher's own nobility and power. Through his deeds and his speeches, Alcibiades declares, Socrates proves that he is a maker of noble souls. More precisely, the philosopher demonstrates that he is a "midwife" who assists nature in the generation of nobility or beauty, or who facilitates the reproduction of virtue in human beings.[110] Like the satyr Marsyas who was flayed alive by Apollo, Socrates *is* guilty of extreme hubris. But this hubris is justified as part of a pedagogic strategy that transforms potential tyrants into aspiring gentlemen, men who strive to gratify their *eros* by having intercourse with the beauty of virtue. As a consequence of his treatment by Socrates, Alcibiades professes, his soul underwent a radical transformation that could not have been achieved by any other man. Inspired by the philosopher's own example of independence and strength, Alcibiades came to love virtue: the philosopher awakened within him the desire to exercise that power over oneself which attends the cultivation of excellence in the soul. Thus, professing his intense love of beauty or nobility, his longing to posses a truly noble glory and power, Alcibiades presents his own beautified self to us as a defence of the philosopher in political society, claiming to demonstrate in his very person that the hubristic *eros* of Socrates contributes to the beautification or ennoblement of man.

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[110] On Socrates as a "midwife", see *Theaetetus*,149a-151d, especially 150d: "...whoever associate with me, some appear at first as even very foolish, but all--whomever the god allows--as the association advances, make an amazing lot of progress...And this too is as plain as day, that they never learnt any thing from me, but they on their own from theirselves found and gave birth to many beautiful things." (Trans. Seth Benardete, *Plato's Theaetetus*, U of Chicago Press, 1984).

5. Conclusion:

The Failure of Alcibiades

We began our examination of the *Symposium* by noting Aristophane's desire to criticize some element of Socrates' erotic eulogy. Relying upon the comic poet's depiction of the philosopher in *The Clouds*, and surveying the teaching on *eros* that Socrates attributes to Diotima, we concluded that this Aristophanic criticism of Socrates would have amounted to a condemnation of the hubris entailed by the philosophic *eros*, and of the disruptive effect that this hubristic striving has upon the youth in the city. Diotima had argued that the philosophic 'pederast', the lover of wisdom whose *eros* propels him into an association with the most beautiful and talented youth, in fact contributes to the good governance of the political association by engendering moderation and justice in the souls of young men. Ultimately, the priestess suggested, there is a symbiotic harmony between the philosophic and political goods, and the selfishness of the philosopher accordingly poses no threat to the stability of the *polis*. But just as Aristophanes opened his mouth to respond, in burst Alcibiades, living proof that Socrates' pedagogy did not always succeed in making the youth more moderate and more just. Alcibiades appears in the *Symposium* as an immoderate usurper, a 'philerast' whose love of power and glory compels him to transform moderate democratic order into a demagogic one, prelude to outright autocracy. Alcibiades thus represents the criticism of Diotima's apology for philosophic pederasty that Aristophanes would have advanced if given the opportunity to speak: neither temperate nor just, this product of Socratic nurture renders the philosophic *eros* questionable once again, requiring that the hubristic philosopher's contribution to the political good be defended on grounds other than its generation of moderation and justice in those least inclined to it.

However, at the same time as it raises considerable suspicion about Socrates' hubris, the speech delivered by Alcibiades in the *Symposium* offers a powerful defence and vindication of the philosopher's association with high-spirited young men. For although advertised as a eulogy of Socrates, the philerast's speech is in reality a recollection of his own education at the hands of the philosopher, recalling how his youthful longing for political tyranny was transformed into a mature love of human beauty or nobility as a consequence of Socrates' hubris. Through his association with Socrates, Alcibiades testifies, he became acquainted with a standard of beauty which was far more splendid than the beauty of physical form, and which was the source of the philosopher's superior power and his noble independence from the many. His vanity wounded by Socrates' hubristic rejection of his own physical beauty, Alcibiades came to doubt that his striving for honour and power in the city represented the path to the highest human good, and he was thus prepared for a reformatory education that would redirect his *eros* towards the noble pursuit of virtue. By witnessing Socrates' superior example of manliness in war and battle, his soul of this high-spirited man re*form*ed, his reason falling in love with the divine "images of virtue" that resided in the philosopher's soul. Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* reveals that he was rendered stronger and more beautiful by Socrates' education in love and war. Hence, the philosopher's hubristic *eros* is defended against the charge of its corrupting influence on the grounds of its ennobling power, its capacity to assist nature in the reproduction of beautiful or noble souls.

Thus, the defence of Socrates advanced by Alcibiades amounts to the claim that the philosopher is an educator of gentlemen, of noble and good men (*kalai k'agathai*). Through his speeches and deeds, Socrates instills within the youth a profound longing to be noble, thereby promoting the cause of virtue in democracy. While he appears to the many (and to the poets who cater to popular taste) to be at best ridiculous and at worst a pernicious influence in the city, the philosopher is in reality a natural aristocrat who has the power to lead others to this best condition of the soul.

However, as the condition of Alcibiades at this banquet suggests, we cannot accept this eloquent assertion of the philosopher's beautification of the youth without qualification. For although Alcibiades claims in his eulogy that under the tutelage of Socrates he came to recognize and embrace the beauty of virtue and the self-sufficient life, his actual behaviour at this symposium reveals that this 'erotic' revolution failed to repel completely the counterrevolutionary effect of political life. Despite his fortunate glimpse into the philosopher's soul, despite his recognition that the love of wisdom, if sufficiently strong, can endow a man with a near superhuman strength and independence, Alcibiades could not bring himself to imitate fully the example of Socrates, and he succumbed once again to his desire for popular glory. The freedom and self-mastery promised by the contemplative life ultimately proved insufficient to release Alcibiades from enslavement to the city; or, more precisely, from enslavement to his great love of honour. Socrates' noble influence over this philerast was only temporary, for once Alcibiades was safely out of earshot of the philosopher's bewitching music, he resumed his quest to become the beloved of the *demos*, accommodating himself to popular taste in order to aggrandize his power in the city. Hence, much as Alcibiades confesses in his eulogy, he fled like a runaway slave from the philosopher's beautifying *logos*, taking refuge in the adoration of the many (216a-c).[111]

Alcibiades' failure as a lover of Socrates, or as a lover of the beauty of wisdom and the philosophic life, is undoubtedly connected to his political failure as well. As we saw in examining Alcibiades' usurpation of rule at this banquet, this man's tyrannical aspirations were fuelled by his fundamentally irreconcilable and competing loves, or by the war waged within his soul between his noble love for Socrates and his desire to be with the many. Unwilling to abandon either of these beloveds, and hence unable to gratify either fully, Alcibiades stood in a precarious no-man's land between the goodness of philosophy and the goodness of political glory: whereas he longed to receive the love of the many, his continuing admiration for Socrates and all that the man represented caused him to despise popular taste and judgement. Alcibiades was unable to devote himself fully to the Socratic example, as his love of honour pulled him back towards the city and its praise. Yet at the same time he was incapable of divorcing himself completely from the philosopher's noble example of human excellence, and hence he could not fully accommodate himself to the many's vulgar standards. Torn in this way, Alcibiades could rule this gathering only as a tyrant, corrupting men's souls to make them more pliant, more receptive to his rule. As a consequence of his association with Socrates and his abortive education into the mysteries of *eros*, Alcibiades became a divided, and politically dangerous, man.

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[111] The failure of Alcibiades' reformatory education is perhaps suggested by the dramatic conclusion of the dialogue: following Alcibiades' account of his turn to virtue and his brief game of musical chairs with Socrates and Agathon, a gang of drunken revellers burst through the open door, and the party was reduced to bacchic chaos (223b).

Upon reflection, this erotic failure would appear to be traceable to Alcibiades' spiritedness, to that passionate faculty of the soul which is the source of both the noble love of victory and the reproachable love of honour, and to which the virtue of courage corresponds.[112] Put otherwise, Alcibiades failure to consummate his love for Socrates, and his related inability to dissociate himself from the praise of the many, evinces a lack of courage or will power on his part, a failure to overcome his greatest fears. As Alcibiades reveals in his testimony, *if* he were willing to lend his ears to Socrates' speeches he would be compelled even now to feel shame over his enslavement to the many and the vicious condition of his soul. But, he confesses, he lacks the power to endure the psychic torment induced by the philosopher's speeches, despite his recognition—that his soul would benefit from such a 'musical' education (215e-216a). Hence, Alcibiades would himself appear to be ruled tyrannically by two irrepressible fears: the fear of public anonymity, and the fear of confronting fairly and fully the ugliness and weakness of his soul. Alcibiades lacks sufficient courage to devote himself wholly to the Socratic example because men like Socrates do not receive the love and esteem of the many. Indeed, as we are reminded in the *Symposium*, the philosopher is ordinarily a target of popular ridicule, and may even be the object of great public reproach (183a,221d-e).[113] To follow the example of Socrates would thus entail abandoning the desire for immortalizing fame or glory; yet Alcibiades, driven by a fear of public namelessness, seems incapable of taming this erotic impulse.[114] But above all, Alcibiades appears to lack the courage required to face his own soul, or to endure the pain which attends the quest for virtue. Socrates' *logos* compelled this young man to agree that the life he was leading was shameful and worthless, a reflection of something ugly and slavish within his soul. This tortuous path to self-knowledge proved too much for Alcibiades to bear, and he escaped the harsh instruction of his taskmaster to return to the comforting praise of the mob. Ironically, then, the soul of this formidable warrior suffers from a debilitating weakness induced by fear: while Alcibiades would brave great dangers to life and limb in pursuit of political glory, he nevertheless recoils like a coward from both the prospect of public dishonour and the pain of self-knowledge. It is indeed Alcibiades' great love of honour which keeps him from imitating the example of Socrates, yet this longing for public recognition in turn reflects a lack of courage to face his deficiencies as a first step to overcoming them. In short, Alcibiades lacks sufficient courage to love virtue.

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[112] *Republic*,375a-e,410d,548c.

[113] See also *Republic*,487b-d.

[114] It is only an added irony that the philosophic Socrates came to receive a far greater and more lasting fame than the political Alcibiades--a consequence of his immortalization in the poetry of Plato and Xenophon.

This account of Alcibiades' failure would thus appear to yield certain implications regarding philosophy, education, and the power of *eros* over the human soul. Firstly, from the portrayal of Alcibiades' failure presented in the *Symposium* we may infer that the love of honour or the concern to be held in esteem by others is antithetical to the genuine pursuit of wisdom and virtue. The man who loves honour strives to accommodate himself to prevailing tastes and prejudices, to become a 'man of the people', as a means to enhancing his image in the eyes of others. The lover of honour values praise above the truth, and he is constantly forced to compromise his beliefs to receive the acclaim of men whom (ironically) he regards as his inferiors. In arguments, he is eristic, placing a premium upon his cleverness in speaking rather than his contribution to discovering the truth. And in contests, he is not above cheating in order to reap the honours which attend victory. But perhaps most importantly, the man who loves honour is incapable of admitting his ignorance before others. Human beings take pride in their intellectual powers (whether this pride is warranted or not), viewing ignorance and stupidity as a shameful weakness of mind or reason. The man who is concerned about his public image, then, is reluctant to display this weakness of reason before other men, often sticking adamantly to his opinions and arguments despite their incoherence or falsity. Hence, the lover of honour would appear to be incapable of taking that crucial first step in the pursuit of knowledge; namely, recognizing that one does not in reality *know* the truth concerning a matter, but that one remains in a condition of ignorance or perplexity. Men in the city do honour those who *appear* to be wise; and despite the fact that being judged wise by the many non-wise is worth little (cf.194b), men like Alcibiades who love praise above knowledge accordingly lack the strength to embrace the noble example of Socratic ignorance. As Diotima once taught Socrates, men who love honour and public renown are intensely erotic human beings who pursue immortality through the acquisition of fame or glory. Yet, she continued, the souls of such human beings remain fundamentally "irrational" in character (*alogon*;208c), and hence they would not appear to be promising candidates for the life of reason.

Secondly, insofar as the failure of Alcibiades to make a permanent turn to philosophy represents a failure of spiritedness or the will, then philosophy would appear to demand the utmost in courage and strength of will from those who undertake to strive for wisdom and virtue. That is, philosophic men may well be blessed with monstrous intelligence, but apparently mental agility by itself does not make one a lover of wisdom. Indeed, many men who display such superior powers of reason nevertheless remain farthest from philosophy, employing their intellect in sophistic pursuits which gratify either their love of honour or love of gain. The genuine philosopher, then, would appear to be that man whose superior reason is wedded to great courage and endurance, and energized by a sovereign love of wisdom. He is a human being who steadfastly pursues a rational apprehension of the truth regardless of how painful that quest becomes, or how ugly the truth he values proves to be.[115] As Alcibiades' failure to follow the example of Socrates reveals, the philosophic human being must possess sufficient courage to endure public anonymity or, still worse, public scorn. Socrates was a man who appeared unconcerned with how the many viewed his life, refusing to abort his quest for wisdom and virtue despite the popular ridicule and disdain it brought him. Philosophy is by nature an activity practiced by the few, and it will forever be seen as trivial or foolish by the many (221e). Hence, the man who engages in this quest for knowledge must overcome his love of honour (or fear of ridicule), placing priority upon the good of his soul rather than how he appears in the eyes of others.

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[115] Consider Diotima's account of the penultimate stage of the ascent to Beauty, the distinctly 'philosophic' stage where the lover comes to behold the beauty of reason: "but with a permanent turn to the vast open sea of the beautiful, behold it and give birth--with ungrudging philosophy--to many beautiful and magnificent speeches and thoughts; until there, ***strengthened and increased***, he may discern a single knowledge..."(210d;my emphasis). Indeed, in Alcibiades praise of Socrates, a consistent theme is the philosopher's superior courage and strength of will, his capacity to endure great hardship and his mastery over the fears which destroy other men.

Moreover, as we learn from Alcibiades' inability to endure the shame induced by Socrates' speeches, philosophy demands great courage on yet another front: the battle for self-knowledge and self-perfection. The pursuit of human excellence, the quest to *be* virtuous regardless of what one seems to others, is perhaps the most painful quest known to man. It demands that one strip one's soul nude and confront it honestly, recognizing one's vices and weaknesses for what they are, and devoting all of one's power to rooting out those shameful loves which detract from the pursuit of psychic harmony. The hardest truths to bear are generally truths about oneself, truths about the ugliness of one's soul: all men long to feel self-esteem and to be reconciled with themselves, and it accordingly takes great courage to face up to those deficiencies and limitations which are the source of great shame or guilt, and which we would prefer to either ignore or deny. Indeed, the phenomenon of self-love would seem a most paradoxical feature of the human condition: as one's love for oneself increases in intensity, likewise does the desire for self-perfection, for the good of one's soul, intensify; yet with this intensified love for the self, a soul recoils from seeing itself as ugly, and hence is unable to take the crucial first step in self-beautification. The philosopher, the man who "turns his mind upon himself" in lengthy bouts of self-reflection (174d), must thus possess the courage to confront his vices without recoiling in shame, and he must demonstrate great strength of will as he strives to replace this ugliness with a condition of beauty or nobility.

Thirdly, Alcibiades' abortive education in gentlemanliness raises perplexing questions regarding the relationship between the rational and passionate faculties of the human soul, inasmuch as it suggests that there may be definite limits to the power of reason to sublimate or channel *eros* towards higher, more noble pursuits. Early in the eulogistic competition, doctor Eryximachus praised the power of reason to control and manipulate the dual *erotes* in all of nature, declaring that by means of rational art or *techne* man might effectively harmonize the noble and base, the Uranian and Pandemian, forms of passion (186c-d). While the technician granted that education, the effort to harmonize the light and dark *erotes* in the human soul through music or poetry, represents the greatest challenge to human *techne*, nevertheless he maintained that even this difficult enterprise could be mastered by a "good craftsman" (*agathou demiourgou*;188d). In Eryximachus' eulogy, Eros emerged as a deity possessing "close to total power" (188d); yet reason, he maintained, emerged victorious in its contest with *eros*, having the power to control the force of passion in human and non-human life, and to channel it towards the good of man.

With its emphasis upon the power of rational art to control nature (and human nature) for the "relief of man's estate", the physician's technological optimism nicely anticipates the modern scientific outlook (cf.188c-e). But the example of Alcibiades (and men like him) suggests that this rational optimism, if not wholly groundless, must be severely tempered. For even though his reason came to behold the "divine images of virtue" in Socrates' *logos*, and even though he recognized the contribution of that virtue to his personal good and health of soul, Alcibiades *eros* was not in the end persuaded to pursue that virtuous condition--the rational apprehension of the good did not of itself yield Alcibiades sufficient strength to rule or suppress his great love of honour. Despite being able to 'see' the superior goodness of the contemplative and self-sufficient life, Alcibiades continued to be ruled by his passion for public acclaim, slipping back toward the many and its accolades. Alcibiades was thus like a man suffering from a debilitating addiction, lacking sufficient will power to deny himself the pleasure of his self-destructive passions despite recognizing that such an erotic revolution would conduce to the good of his soul.

According to the philerast's eulogy, Socrates apparently displayed an amazing power over *eros*, remaining immune to those pleasures which rule the passions of men in the city. Yet the philosopher, he stressed repeatedly, was unique or strange (*atopos*;lit: "out of place") in his self-control and self-mastery -- lesser men (meaning all other men) do not demonstrate such great rational control over their passions and desires. It is indeed an amazing feature of the human condition that men generally lack the power to bring their passions ~~into full conformity~~ with their reason, continuing to love and pursue forms of bodily and psychic gratification that they recognize to be bad and harmful. Unlike animals, in whom reason and instinct appear in perfect harmony, human beings do not instinctively do that which is good for both body and soul, but require the aid of conscious reason to guide them to the good. Possessing the rational faculty that elevates them beyond the level of animal simplicity, men rely upon their reason to identify those things and pursuits which contribute to their 'health', and towards which they should direct their erotic or acquisitive energy. Yet even if reason does perform this role adequately, even if the prudent faculty of the soul does apprehend the good and strive to channel *eros* toward it, nevertheless it often fails in its attempt to persuade the will to disregard the lower appetites that pull the soul towards unhealthy and harmful pursuits. Contrary to Diotima's explicit teaching, *eros* would not appear to will the good unproblematically, for the passionate element of the human soul often remains intransigent before reason's prudent discrimination of the good, refusing to abandon pleasure in order to pursue those things which really contribute to the well-being of a man, the comprehensive health of body and soul. The failure of Alcibiades to devote himself completely to Socrates, his failure to love the Socratic example unequivocally and to make a permanent turn to the goodness he beheld in the philosophic way of life, thus bespeaks a dangerous disharmony in the human soul between reason and *eros*. More precisely, it suggests that, in the end, the souls of men who fall short of Socratic self-control are ruled by *eros* rather than reason, and hence that the human animal remains ambivalent in the face of the good, or at least in the face of the truth about the good.[116] The case of Alcibiades' abortive education in virtue reveals that man's distance fom the good is not always to be attributed to his failure to *understand* what would truly contribute to the health of body and soul, but that this inability to rule or suppress inferior loves evinces a weakness of the will, a failure of *eros* to serve human beings adequately.[117]

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[116] Alternatively, as we suggested with respect to Alcibiades' misunderstanding of Socratic moderation, perhaps the philosophic soul is itself ultimately ruled by *eros*, its distinctiveness or uniqueness being a product of something exceedingly rare, a predominating love of reason.

[117] Cf. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Aph.230,231. As this psychologist puts it: "Learning changes us; it does what all nourishment does which also does not merely "preserve"--as physiologists know. But at the bottom of us, really "deep down",

If this is indeed a correct inference from the example of Alcibiades, if it is true that *eros* rules over reason in the souls of the non-wise (or at least the non-philosophers), then this tyranny of passion over human beings presents profound implications for philosophic and educational practice. For the dominance of the irrational over the rational in the human soul suggests that dialectical speech, that form of speech which makes its appeal primarily to reason, may by itself prove insufficient to persuade a man to live in accordance with what he prudently discerns to be his good. More precisely, it suggests that a form of philosophy which seeks to teach human beings about the noble and the good solely and always through a dialectical appeal to reason will fail to educate the whole of a man's soul, and will consequently lack the power either to reproduce itself as a noble way of life or to assist nature in the reproduction of beautiful souls. Consider: Men are not born philosophers. Thus, the normal tendency for men is to call good those things which are familiar or which please them, not to identify the good by means of reason and to call that pleasing and one's own (cf.205e). Hence, a form of education which seeks to dissolve this primary erotic attachment to one's own, to instill within the souls of rare and talented men the desire to discover the truth about the good, must have the power to seduce the passions into compliance with reason, to persuade *eros* to follow reason's lead in the quest for the good life. That is, an educational effort which seeks to make men philosophic by harmonizing the tension within their souls between reason and *eros* must have at its disposal a form of speech which can make an appeal to the erotic dimension of man, and cannot rely solely upon a dialectical idiom which speaks only to men's reason. As Diotima's instruction of the young Socrates reveals, this educational imperative strikes at the heart of the philosopher's own selfish pursuit of wisdom as well, since the generation of nobility and goodness in the youth is critical to the philosophic ascent to Beauty, being the means through which the lover of wisdom comes to behold the beautiful in laws, puruits and knowledge. Hence the good of

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[117](cont'd) there is, of course, something unteachable, some granite of spiritual *fatum*, of predetermined decision and answer to predetermined, selected questions" (#231). Could this basic stupidity that we are be our individual erotic natures, our personal 'demon', something which is educable, but only up to a point (cf.*Republic*, 619b-c).

philosophy, its power to lead men to an apprehension of the good and its power to generate a noble or beautiful state of soul, would seem to require that it seek out an alliance with rhetoric or poetry, with a form of speech which charms the passionate or the erotic in man through the beauty of its words and phrases. As Alcibiades observed in his eulogy, Socrates' musical *logos* shared a certain kinship with tragic poetry, leaving men "thunderstruck" and in tears with its portrayal of the virtuous life. Yet even this moderate poetic appeal of Socrates' speeches lacked sufficient power to persuade fully men like Alcibiades, high-spirited men whose *eros* remained stubborn in its attraction to the city. In the end, Socrates' unique dialectical speech was excessively rational in character, making its appeal to the prudent part of the soul and proving incapable of charming the erotic faculty which tyrannizes men. Much as the philosopher admitted before the poetic Agathon, he was incapable of speaking in an exceedingly beautiful way (198b). But *eros* is drawn instinctively to the beautiful, and hence philosophy would appear to need poetry if it is to attract men to the beauty of the contemplative life: reason, or wisdom, or the challenge to pursue knowledge as one of the greatest goods, must be artificially beautified. Poetry would appear to be crucial to the educational efficacy, and thus to the erotic or reproductive potential, of philosophy.

All of this would appear to return us to the question with which we began: to what extent does the failure of Alcibiades to rule his *eros* and pursue the beauty of virtue reflect a failure on the part of Socrates, a defect in his educational practice caused by his hubristic distance from men. Socrates may well be (as Alcibiades asserts) a capable assistant of nature in the generation of beautiful souls, yet the case of Alcibiades himself proves that the philosopher's "midwifery" has limited success with certain exceptionally spirited men. Owing perhaps to his lack of dexterity in the poetic idiom, Socrates was unable to turn Alcibiades' soul around, to inspire within this man an enduring love for wisdom and virtue which would make him truly philosophic. In fact, the partial education that the philerast received from the philosopher only succeeded in intensifying his tyrannical aspirations, rendering him incapable of regarding seriously the approval of the many that his *eros* craved, and thus impervious to any tempering effect that the need for such approval might have had. Socrates' failure to reform Alcibiades suggests that the philosopher's unpoetic, dialectical speech renders philosophy sterile, lacking the power to reproduce that contemplative way of life which alone can lead a man to understand and embrace the human good. Thus we are led to see some justice in Aristophane's critique of Socrates: as a consequence of his hubristic rationality, his distance from the ordinary condition of the human soul, Socrates' educational *logos* lacks that poetic quality which alone can speak to the passions and teach the whole of the soul to desire the sublime beauty of virtue. As a measure of how seriously Plato may have taken this criticism of his teacher, we should observe that the *Symposium* itself represents one of this philosopher's most successful, most beautiful 'poetic' endeavours. Whereas Plato was inspired by Socrates to lead the life of reason, his own educational practice departed significantly from that of his mentor, proceeding by way of dialogues which effectively wed a rigorous dialectical idiom with the beauty and erotic appeal of poetry. Unlike Socrates, Plato became a philosopher-poet, conveying his thoughts about the virtues and vices of men through a dramatic medium which speaks to and trains both the rational and passionate faculties of the soul, and which thereby rectifies the apparent defect in Socrates' hubris.

Admittedly, these concluding thoughts are aporetic in character, representing questions which require further investigation rather than conclusive answers. However, what does emerge clearly from this study of the *Symposium* is that the need to understand the erotic dimension of human life is a pressing one for man, particularly so in an age when *eros* has been reduced in our minds to the phenomenon of brute sexuality. *Eros*, we learn in the *Symposium*, is perhaps the most mysterious power of the human soul (if not all nature), a force which can inspire men to achieve the heights of virtue and self-mastery, yet which can also drive them towards vulgar enslavement to their baser longings. As the hubristic or striving dimension of the soul, *eros* would appear to represent at once man's greatest strength *and* his greatest weakness, compelling human beings to pursue self-expression and self-overcoming through both creative and destructive deeds, both noble and shameful endeavours. The question of *eros* is a most important one for the student of politics as well, not least of all because it is the motive force behind the quest for fame or glory as well as material acquisition, and hence has the power to produce either statesmen or tyrants. In short, the erotic things about which Socrates claims expert knowledge in the *Symposium* would appear to span the entire spectrum of human concerns, embracing such seemingly diverse phenomena as sexuality, love, politics, art, beauty, virtue, the good, and philosophy. Needless to say, reflection upon *eros* and its role in human life would thus appear to represent the task of a lifetime, one demanding the utmost in courage and an unceasing labour in pursuit of the truth.

By way of underscoring the crucial importance of knowledge about *eros* for human life, let me conclude this essay by quoting at length from someone who has devoted much time and energy to considering the question of human eroticism in its fullness:

> "In all species other than man, when an animal reaches puberty, it is all that it will ever be. This stage is the clear end toward which all of its growth and learning is directed. The animal's activity is reproduction. It lives on this plateau until its starts downhill. Only in man is puberty just the beginning. The greater and more interesting part of his learning, moral and intellectual, comes afterward, and in civilized man is incorporated into his erotic desire. His taste and hence his choices are determined during this "sentimental education". It is as though his learning were for the sake of his sexuality. Reciprocally, much of the energy for that learning comes from his sexuality. Nobody takes human children who have reached puberty to be adults. We properly sense that there is a long road to adulthood, the condition in which they are able to govern themselves and be true mothers and fathers. This road is the serious part of education, where animal sexuality becomes human sexuality, where instinct gives way to choice with regard to the true, the good, and the beautiful. Puberty does not provide man, as it does other animals, with all that he needs to leave behind others of his kind. This means that the animal part of his sexuality is intertwined in the most complex way with the higher reaches of his soul, which must inform the desires with its insight, and that the most delicate part of education is to keep the two in harmony.
>
> I cannot pretend that I understand very much of this mystery, but knowing that I do not know keeps me attentive to, and far from the current simplifications of, the phenomena of this aspect of our nature that links the highest and the lowest in us."[111]

Even more so than this man, I remain in a condition of perplexity regarding the daemonic or mediating *eros* which links the bestial and the divine in the human soul. Yet like him, I consider this perplexity to be a blessing, a liberation from conventional opinions and prejudices and hence a first step to overcoming my ignorance on the question.

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[111] Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1987, pp.133-4.

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